

EXPLORING WEIGHT IDENTITY:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE  
AND BEHAVIORAL COMPONENTS OF WEIGHT

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The current study sought to expand social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to include the concept of weight. Previous research has shown that individuals have social identities associated with age (e.g., Garstka, Hummert & Branscombe, 2005; Gartska, Schmitt, Branscombe & Hummert, 2004; Hummert, Gartska, Ryan & Bonnesen, 2004), disabilities (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Hahn, 1988; Scambler & Hopkins, 1986), sex (e.g., Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Skevington & Baker, 1989), and ethnicity (e.g., Rush, 1998; Williams, 1999). Each of the aforementioned concepts are physical traits as well as socially constructed phenomena. In the same respect, weight is both a physical trait and is socially constructed. Thus, this study focused on the existence of weight identity

Female participants were solicited through the basic communication course of a large Midwestern university and participated in an on-line survey. Based on participants' responses, they were then divided into three weight groups – underweight ( $N = 4$ ), average weight ( $N = 11$ ) and overweight and obese ( $N = 10$ ), based on Body Mass Index (BMI) scores. Participants in all three groups were then asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Based on the responses from the interviews, this study revealed that weight has properties of a social identity and is more salient in overweight and obese participants. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* weight, eating disorders, obesity, social identity theory, thematic analysis

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my nieces, Jane Elizabeth, Cathryn Lee, and Caroline Scott Hicks. You were and continue to be my sources of inspiration on my darkest days as well as an endless source of entertainment. I love you and hope that you grow to see yourselves as perfect the way you are.

I also dedicate my dissertation to my mother, Janice M. Asbury, who sacrificed her own needs so that her family could succeed. Thank you for all that you have done for us. And never forget, “I told you so.”



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

America has an obsession with thinness and weight (Stearns, 1997), spending \$40 billion annually on diet products and programs (Reisner, 2008). This “cult of thinness” (Hesse-Biber, 1996; Ritenbaugh, 1982) has led to the prevalence of disordered eating, including diseases such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa as well as obesity. Currently, one in five American women and one in nine men struggle with disordered eating (Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness, 2010), and over half of America’s population is classified as either overweight or obese (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). While eating disorders and obesity are prevalent, they are also dangerous: 50,000 die as a result of anorexia or bulimia nervosa (Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness, 2010); and 300,000 deaths in the United States annually are attributed to obesity (Stein & Colditz, 2004; United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Because of the prevalence of eating disorders and obesity, many studies have been conducted on the phenomena. Medical studies have focused on the physical aspects of these conditions. For example, regarding anorexia and bulimia nervosa, studies have examined physical causes (e.g., Uher, Murphy, Brammer, Dalgleish, Phillips, & Ng et al., 2004; Uher & Treasure, 2005; Warn, Voussoughian, Geer, Hyle, Adberg, & Ramos, 1999) and the mortality (e.g., Emborg, 1999; Nielsen, 2001; Herzog, Nussbaum, & Marmor, 1996) associated with the diseases. In addition, obesity studies have been conducted regarding the epidemiology of obesity (e.g., Gini, Downey, Atkinson, Billington, Bray, & Eckel et al., 2008; Aronne, Nelinson, & Lillo, 2009; Bray, 2004a; Conway & Rene, 2004; Jung, 1997), weight maintenance (e.g., Anderson, Konz, Frederich, & Wood, 2001; Butryn, Phelan, Hill & Wing, 2007; Elfhag &

Rossner, 2005; Jain, Ferguson, Mauery, Pervez, & Gooding, 2007), weight and psychosocial functioning (e.g., Forey, Brunner, Goodrick, Cutter, Brownell, & St. Jeor, 1995; Warschburger, 2005), and physical ailments associated with obesity (e.g., Bray, 2004b; Solomon & Manson, 1997).

While eating disorders and obesity are diagnosable physical conditions, the formation of these ailments can be influenced by social factors. Studies of eating disorders from a social scientific perspective have been conducted regarding family influence (e.g., Botta & Dumalo, 2002; Horesh, Apter, Ishai, Danziger, Miculincer, Stein, et al., 1996; Humphrey, 1986; Prescott & Le Poire, 2002; Strober & Humphrey, 1987; Wonderlich, 1992), childhood sexual abuse, (e.g., Oppeneimer, Howells, Palmer & Chaloner, 1985; Root & Fallon, 1989; Pope & Hudson, 1992), and media exposure (Bissell & Peiquin, 2006; David, Morrison, Johnson & Ross, 2002; Harrison, 2000; Harrison, Taylor & Marske, 2006). Additionally, studies of obesity have focused on stigma (e.g., Crandall & Martinez, 1996; Latner & Stunkard, 2003; Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004), doctor-patient interaction (e.g., Banasaik & Murr, 2001; Befort, Grener, Hall, Pulvers, Nollen, Carbonneau et al., 2006; Foster, Wadden, Makris, Davidson, Sanderson, Gini & Kessler, 2003; Huizinga, Cooper, Bleich, Clark & Beach, 2009), and the social management of weight (Cordell & Ronai, 1999; Degher & Huhes, 1999; Maurer & Sobal, 1999; Stinson, 2001).

The concept of body weight, whether one has too little or has too much, is a physical condition. One's weight is affected by his or her behaviors. For example, if one consistently eats too much, this person runs the risk of becoming overweight or obese (Levitsky, Halbmaier, & Mrdjenovic, 2004). Currently, medical practitioners and policy makers are working under the assumption that the solutions to the weight problems in the United States are behavioral.

Although policy makers and medical practitioners have been preaching behavioral changes to Americans, the fact remains that the nation continues to make unhealthy choices regarding nutrition. For instance, it has been projected that if the current trends in obesity continue, by 2030, 86.3% adults will be overweight or obese (Wang, Beydoun, Liang, Caballero, & Kumanyika, 2008). Although the government and medical professionals' message is simple, "eat less and exercise more," the current statistics indicate that this message is not being heeded.

Perhaps one reason why Americans are not adhering to this message is because the focus has solely been on the medical and physical components of weight. As the cited studies indicate, weight also has social components. Medical professionals and government agencies have a tendency to ignore the social aspects of weight. Thus, a vital piece of the puzzle is being overlooked regarding how to approach healthy lifestyle changes.

A social factor that has yet to be examined regarding weight is the notion of identity. Identity has been defined by Deaux (1996) as a "connection with some other person or group" (p. 777). Originally conceptualized as a psychological phenomenon (e.g., Epstein, 1980; Freud, 1985; Gecas, 1982; Markus & Cross, 1990; Markus & Wurf, 1987), identity has evolved into a socially constructed phenomenon (Lloyd & Lucas, 1998). One specific area of identity that has yet to be examined is the notion of social identity. Social identity refers to how social categories and group memberships influence one's self-perception (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975).

Research has shown that individuals have social identities associated with their age (e.g., Garstka, Hummert & Branscombe, 2005; Gartska, Schmitt, Branscombe & Hummert, 2004; Hummert, Gartska, Ryan & Bonnesen, 2004), disabilities (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Hahn, 1988; Scambler & Hopkins, 1986), sex (e.g., Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Skevington & Baker,

1989), and ethnicity (e.g., Rush, 1998; Williams, 1999). Each of these concepts are physical traits as well as socially constructed phenomena. For example, one can look a person and see how old she or he is, but society tells us what that age means. Being classified as a senior citizen carries certain connotations (e.g., slower, wiser, etc.). The same can be said for weight, for I can look at a person and see how much space is taken up or how well his or her clothes are fitting. While weight is physical and observable, it is also influenced by social factors. Society tells people what it means to be a certain weight, for overweight and obese people have stigmas associated simply with their physical appearance (e.g., Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004).

The concepts of age, sex, disability status, and ethnicity have been shown to be social identities, and each of these characteristics is observable and socially constructed. In the same respect, the concept of weight is also observable and socially constructed. If these characteristics are relatively the same, why has little research been done to examine if there is such a thing as weight identity? This study seeks to answer that question by studying underweight women, average weight women, and women who are overweight and obese, in order to define the concept of *weight identity*, and to determine if a weight identity exists, then to examine how it is formed communicatively, and examine in what situations it is enacted.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa**

Medically, there are specific diagnostic criteria for anorexia and bulimia nervosa. According to the American Psychological Association (2000), a person is diagnosed as suffering from anorexia nervosa if the following conditions are met: the individual refuses to maintain body weight at or above a minimally average weight for age and height; the individual has an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though if he or she is underweight; the individual experiences a disturbance in the way his or her body weight or shape is experienced, such that there is undue influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or there is denial of the seriousness of the current low body weight; and, in women who are menstruating, there is an absence of at least three consecutive menstrual cycles. There are two distinct types of anorexia – the restricting type and the binge-eating/purging type. The restricting type does not binge but simply restricts food intake. Persons with the binge-eating/purging type restrict food but also participate in episodes of binge eating followed by purging behavior.

Similarly, the American Psychological Association (2000) notes that an individual suffers from bulimia nervosa if there are recurrent episodes of binge eating. Binge eating is characterized by the following: eating an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat in a discrete period of time (e.g., within a two-hour period); a sense of lack of control over eating during the episode (e.g., feeling one cannot control or stop what or how much one is eating); and recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or other medications, fasting, or excessive exercise. In bulimics these behaviors both occur, on average, at least twice

a week for three months. In addition, the individual experiences self-evaluation that is excessively influenced by body shape and weight. Like anorexia nervosa, there are two specific types of bulimics – the purging type and the nonpurging type. Persons with the purging type regularly engage in self-induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas. Persons with the nonpurging type use other inappropriate compensatory behaviors, such as fasting or excessive exercise, but do not regularly engage in self-induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas. However, unlike anorexia nervosa, bulimics can maintain an average weight.

Sufferers of eating disorders are overwhelmingly female. One in five women suffers from an eating disorder, and females outnumber males approximately 10 to one regarding eating disorders (The Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness, 2010; Lucas, Beard, O’Fallon, & Kurland, 1988). Women experience more pressure than men to achieve a certain body image or appearance and thus are more likely to take extreme measures to reach an ideal weight (Hsu, 1989).

Eating disorders can last from weeks to years, depending on how quickly treatment is sought with the onset of symptoms (The Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness, 2010). Medical practitioners are unclear as to how individuals develop anorexia and bulimia nervosa. Recent studies have sought to examine how these eating disorders are related to malfunctions in brain chemistry (Uher et al., 2004; Uher & Treasure, 2005; Warrn et al., 1999). Most studies, however, concentrate on social causes of the disease, including family relationships, childhood sexual abuse, and the media.

**Family relationships and eating disorders.** One area of research focusing on the social causes of the disease has examined the family’s influence on the development of eating disorders



(Lasegue, 1873; Segrin, 2001; Waller & Calam, 1994). There are numerous models to explain the link between families and eating disorders, and although one single model cannot explain the complexity of eating disorders, most models associate the conditions with family dysfunction (Waller & Calam, 1994). One model, the Olson Circumplex Model (Olson & McCubbin, 1983) examines families in terms of adaptability (i.e., the ability to change) and cohesion (i.e., the emotional bonding among family members). Eating disorders have been associated with perceptions of low family cohesion (Blouin, Zuro, & Blouin, 1990; Humphrey, 1986; Steiger, Puentes-Neuman & Leung, 1991) and extreme levels of adaptability (Dare, Le Grange, & Eisler, 1994; Humphrey, 1986; Waller, Slad & Calam, 1990). Families that demonstrate low cohesion have a lack of leadership, sporadic discipline, and experience frequent change. Families that experience high levels of adaptability have military-like rules, strict discipline, and autocratic leadership (Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

In addition, parental pressure has also been associated with disordered eating. When parents place pressure on their children, particularly their daughters, there is a high propensity for eating disorders (Joiner, Heatherton, Rudd, & Schmidt, 1997; Levine, 1996). Wonderlich (1992) found that bulimia nervosa is associated with three types of families – perfect (i.e., placing a high emphasis on perfectionism regarding appearance and behaviors), overprotective (i.e., not allowing the child to participate in many events outside of the family unit), or chaotic (i.e., few boundaries). All three types of families are characterized by having over-controlling parents, having boundary problems, and placing high significance on weight and appearance.

Similarly, the parent-child relationship can influence the onset of eating disorders. Women with eating disorders tend to characterize their mothers as cold or overprotective (Palmer, Oppeneimer & Marshall, 1988; Pike & Rodin, 1991; Rhodes & Kroger, 1992).

Moreover, there is a link between women with over-critical mothers and eating disorders (Pike & Rodin, 1991; Yanez, Peix, Neus, Amau, & Brug, 2007). In the same respect, the father-daughter relationship can also affect the onset of eating disorders, for Botta and Dumalo (2002) found that women with eating disorders reported a lack of effective conflict resolution strategies with their fathers.

Overall, research (e.g., Joiner et al., 1997; Olson & McCubbin, 1983; Palmer, Oppeneimer & Marshall, 1988; Wonderlich, 1992) has shown a correlation between women with eating disorders and family functioning, namely that these women tend to come from families that demonstrate poor family communication. These families are characterized as having “low levels of cohesion, over protectiveness, high levels of criticism, and low levels of emotional warmth” (Waller & Calam, 1994, p. 69). Such research demonstrates a social influence of eating disorders in women.

**Childhood sexual abuse and eating disorders.** Another area of research indicates an association between childhood sexual abuse, particularly when perpetrated within the family, and eating disorders. Yet, the findings are mixed. Some studies (e.g., Oppeneimer, Howells, Palmer & Chaloner, 1985; Root & Fallon, 1989) indicate an association between sexual abuse and the onset of bulimia nervosa. For example, in a meta-analysis, Wonderlich, Brewerton, Jolic, Dansky and Abbot (1997) found that childhood sexual abuse is a risk factor for bulimia when there is psychiatric comorbidity (i.e., symptoms present simultaneously but are separate). However, other research (e.g., Coover, Kinder & Thompson, 1989; Pope & Hudson, 1992) shows that reported incidents of sexual abuse are no higher for women with eating disorders than those without eating disorders. Thus, the findings are inconclusive.

**The media and eating disorders.** In addition to family relationships and childhood sexual abuse, there are also associations between eating disorders and the media. Print and electronic media have perpetuated thin ideal body types, especially for women (Harris, 2004), despite the fact that the average woman's size has increased from a size eight to a size 14 since 1985 (Kher, 2003). These portrayals of women affect how young girls see themselves, for they compare themselves to those images. Research has shown that thinness depicting and promoting media leads to distorted body-image perceptions and higher scores on the eating-disorder subscales in women (Bissell & Peiquin, 2006; Park, 2005).

In addition, the Internet has provided opportunities for individuals to perpetuate eating disorders by forming pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites (Lapinski, 2006; Tierney, 2006). These websites provide the public with instructions and guides regarding how to starve oneself or how to induce purging. People with eating disorders often use these websites for tips and support regarding how to effectively not eat, how to purge, and how to keep doctors and parents from becoming concerned (Brotsky & Giles, 2007; Mulveen & Hepworth, 2006).

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are diagnosable psychological diseases, but there is a social component regarding their onset and continuation. Both ailments are strongly affected by communication. Patterns exist (e.g., adaptability, cohesion, and parent-child communication) that show connections to certain communication patterns in families and eating disorders. Similarly, exposure to media shows the "perfect" body has been linked to the onset of eating disorders. Moreover, people who are affected with these diseases are finding it easier to continue their destructive habits through online messages. These social components cannot be ignored when trying to treat these conditions.

## **Obesity**

Like anorexia and bulimia nervosa, obesity is both a medical and social condition. Medically, a person is considered to be overweight if he or she has a Body Mass Index (BMI; ratio of weight over height) between 25 and 29, and a person with a BMI of 30 or higher is considered to be obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). While there are other measures that can more accurately determine one's weight range, such as body fat percentage and waist circumference, most medical professionals still use BMI as a means for diagnosing and treating obesity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Obesity, as a disease, has been associated with diabetes, hypertension, and higher mortality rates (Bray, 2004b; Solomon & Manson, 1997).

**Obesity stigma.** Obesity is a diagnosable medical condition (Bray, 2004a; Conway & Rene, 2004; Friedman, 2004) but also has a social component. Despite its medical definitions, people still consider obesity to be the fault of the individual (Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004). Although society strives to end bias against race, sex, and religion, discrimination against the obese is still socially acceptable (Latner, O'Brien, Durso, Brinkman, & MacDonald, 2008; Puhl & Heuer, 2009) and continues to rise (Andreyeva, Puhl, & Brownell, 2008). Stigmatization of obesity varies across racial and ethnic lines, with Caucasians and Americans having the harshest attitudes towards overweight individuals (Crandall & Martinez, 1996; Hebl & Heatherton, 1998; Puhl, Andreyeva, & Brownell, 2008). Unlike other minority groups, who tend to view their own groups more favorably, overweight individuals do not hold implicitly more favorable attitudes toward ingroup members (Schwartz, Vartanian, Nosek, & Brownell, 2006; Wang, Brownell, & Wadden, 2004).

The repercussions associated with obesity stigma have the potential to lead to negative social and economic effects on individuals (Gortmaker, Must, Perrin, Sobol & Dietz, 1993). Obese people are often ostracized socially, being judged as less desirable and less able (Chen & Brown, 2004; Latner & Stunkard, 2003; Wardle & Cooke, 2005). This can, in turn, lead to low self-esteem and the prevention of pursuing educational or vocational goals (Gortmaker et al., 1993).

**Doctor-obese patient interaction.** Linked to obesity stigma studies is doctor-obese patient research. Overweight and obese individuals are more likely to delay or avoid health care for fear of being judged or chastised about their weight (Drury & Louis, 2002). Some research (e.g., Jay, Kalet, Ark, McMaken, Messito, Richter et al., 2009; Schwartz, Chamblis, Brownell, & Billinton, 2002; Teachman & Brownell, 2001) has shown that health professionals have an implicit anti-fat bias, spending less time with heavier patients than with those of average weight (Xu & Hebl, 2001). Even those who are trying to overcome their condition, such as bariatric surgery patients, experience this discrimination (Anderson & Wadden, 2004).

As with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, obesity has social aspects. The stigma associated with the condition socially constructs the condition as something that is bad, and even medical professionals adhere to that definition. This stigma perpetuates the disease because people feel a sense of hopelessness (Gortmaker, Must, Perrin, Sobol & Dietz, 1993).

### **Summary of Eating Disorder and Obesity Findings**

As the findings above indicate, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and obesity are physical and social phenomena. However, despite evidence of the duality of these concepts, medical practitioners and policy makers often focus on the physical nature of weight, arguing for behavioral change. While behavioral change is an integral part of having a healthy weight, there

are other, social phenomena that need to be considered as well. One social phenomenon that has yet to be examined is the concept of identity.

### **Theories of Identity**

**Psychological aspects of identity.** Identity has been conceptualized in various ways, primarily as a psychological concept in relation to the formation of the self. Early studies of identity examined the construct in terms of childhood psychological development (Deaux, 1996). For example, Freud (1955) studied how children develop ties with parental dyads, which primarily focused on emotional aspects of identification (Deaux, 1996).

However, most psychological research has examined the concept of identity as something intrinsic to the self (i.e., a self-concept). Identity as the self-concept views identity to be a *personal identity* (Turner & Onorato, 1999). This *personal identity* is based on personal differences from others, meaning that the self is one's own (Epstein, 1980; Gecas, 1982; Markus & Cross, 1990; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Thus, one's *personal identity* includes stable personality traits and attributes, such as values and beliefs (Turner & Onorato, 1999).

**Social aspects of identity.** While originally viewed as a purely psychological construct, more recently, identity has increasingly been seen socially constructed (Lloyd & Lucas, 1998). Like the psychological perspective, sociological research also focuses on identity in terms of the formation of the self. Within this perspective, the self is established by identifying with social categories within a larger social system (Deaux, 1996; Strker & Statham, 1985). This is achieved two ways. First, the self can be formed based on personal experience and observation (Markus, 1977; Tice, 1994). Second, the self can be formed through social interaction (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). The formation of the self based on personal experience emphasizes cognitive processes that inform attitudes, beliefs, and judgments about past behavior and

observations (Turner & Onorato, 1999). The formation of the self based on social interaction stresses the social aspect of the self, for identities are formed based on how others see and behave towards the individual (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934).

**Social identity theory.** One theory that combines the social and psychological aspects of identity is social identity theory. The concept of social identity implies a distinct view of the self and its association with another person or group (Deaux, 1996; Turner, 1982). Social identity refers to the influence of social categories on one's self-perception, for individuals define themselves according to the groups to which they belong (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory (SIT) differentiates between personal identity and social identity (Brewer, 1991; Brown, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Within SIT, personal identity refers to the individuated self (i.e., characteristics that make individuals unique) (Brewer, 1991; Harwood, 2006). Social identity is depersonalized units of the self, where one goes from being an *I* to a *we* (Brewer, 1991). At the social identity level, individuals act as group members, judging themselves and others in terms of the group (Harwood, 2006). SIT posits that individuals strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity, which requires that they establish a positively valued distinctiveness for their own group compared to other groups, leading to the formation of ingroups and outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Although the theory posits that individuals seek to establish positive social identities by associating with favorable groups, little research shows support for this assumption (Brown, 2000). Research (e.g., Hinkle & Brown, 1990) demonstrates a modest correlation, at best, between strength of group identification and the amount of positive group differentiation. In addition, it is important to note that group membership identification is not related to self-esteem,

for research (e.g., Farnham, Greenwald, & Banji, 1999; Lemyre & Smith, 1985) illustrates that positive group identity is not correlated with positive self-esteem.

Moreover, individuals can identify with low-status groups (Brown, 2000). When people identify with low-status groups, they enact several “identity protecting” tactics, including disidentifying (i.e., leaving the group), becoming socially creative (i.e., redefining or reconstructing comparisons to other groups), and/or contesting the dominant group’s superior status (Brown, 2000; Ellemers, 1993; Turner & Brown, 1978).

SIT is a combination of both the psychological and social perspectives on identity. SIT’s notion of personal identities is very similar to the psychological perspective on identity, which notes that individuals have an individuated *personal identity*, which includes the self-concept and personality (Epstein, 1980; Gecas, 1982; Markus & Cross, 1990; Markus & Wurf, 1987). In addition, the social aspect of SIT is similar to the formation of the self based on observation and interaction. Within SIT, individuals form an identity based on a group or category. These identities can be formed through actual interaction (e.g., being associated with a particular group or category) or through a psychological connection (i.e., observation).

In addition, the psychological and social influences behind SIT can be seen in how social identities are formed. From a psychological and social standpoint, identity is composed of three different components – cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Deaux, 1996). Cognitive processes (i.e., how one thinks) include those associated with categorization; affect processes (i.e., how one feels) include internalization; and behavioral processes (i.e., how one behaves) include actions taken to reaffirm one’s identity with a particular group (Deaux, 1996). The psychological aspects of identity can be seen in the cognitive and affective components, while the behavioral



element is social. A social identity is formed when cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes are enacted (Deaux, 1996).

***Weight as a social identity.*** In terms of weight research, the psychological and social properties of identity are present. Cognitively, overweight individuals have been shown to adopt a “fat identity,” which refers to internalizing societal conceptions of weight (Degher & Hughes, 1999). In terms of affect and behavior, research (e.g., Puhl, Moss-Racusin, & Schwartz, 2006) has shown that overweight and obese individuals internalize weight-based stereotypes, which, in turn, leads to increased binge eating and refusal to diet as well as psychological problems, such as depression and low self-esteem. Women with disordered eating experience similar phenomena. Women classified as having anorexia or bulimia nervosa cognitively identify themselves as being fat, internalize this notion, and then act on it by starving and/or purging (Garfinkel, 2002).

Research has shown that people have social identities associated with their age (e.g., Garstka et al., 2005; Gartska et al., 2004; Hummert et al., 2004), their disabilities (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Hahn, 1988; Scambler & Hopkins, 1986), their sex (e.g., Abrams et al., 1990; Skevington & Baker, 1989), and their ethnicity (e.g., Rush, 1998; Williams, 1999). The aforementioned traits have two things in common. First, they are observable, for one can look at people and can see what sex they are, how old they are, what race they are, and whether they have a physical disability. Second, these traits share the commonality of being socially constructed, meaning that society and experiences inform people on how to interpret these physical characteristics. Previous research associated with race (Collins, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993), gender (Collins, 2001; Lorber & Farrell, 1991), age (Kohli & Meyer, 1986; Ridgeway, 1991), and disability status (Harlan & Robert, 1998; Jones, 1996) has shown that even though

these traits are often observable and physical, the determination of what it means to have such traits is developed through social interaction. For example, in looking at a person, one can see that the person is African American, but society tells us what it means to be African American, which has been associated with being considered less than one's Caucasian counterparts (Collins, 2001).

Additionally, the concept of weight is a social identity issue due to the social construction of weight itself. There are certain numbers on a scale that indicate health, but the *interpretation* of those numbers is culturally bound (Fallon, 1990; Maurer & Sobal, 1999). For example, in Western societies, the preferred weight is thin, and this can be seen in media and fashion portrayals of beauty (Maurer & Sobal, 1999). Yet in other cultures, the preferred weight status is heavier because it indicates wealth and prosperity. The individual operates on a social identity level to understand what those numbers connote. If the group, which could be composed of a certain sex, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, defines those numbers as "fat," then individuals see ourselves as fat (Sobal, 1991). Thus, people strive to meet that group's definition of what is considered ideal, operating on a group level in terms of our weight.

Moreover, individuals often use these traits to define themselves. For example, if a woman were asked to describe herself to a stranger, she would probably define herself as a woman and may mention her race and her age, thus adopting those identities. In the same respect, people define themselves in terms of their weight. This is especially seen in people with eating disorders, who associate themselves with being fat. Despite their actual physical appearance of being underweight, they define themselves as belonging to the "fat group." There is also evidence of this phenomenon with the stigmatization of the obese, for they are defined by that group membership.

The concepts of age, sex, disability status, and ethnicity have been shown to be social identities, and each of these constructs is observable and socially constructed. The concept of weight is also a physical trait and is socially constructed. Thus, this study seeks to find whether individuals have a social identity associated with their weight.

### **Current Study and Research Questions**

Previous research has failed to examine the identity connection to weight. Thus, this study examines how identity is associated with weight. Based on the above review, the following research questions were asked:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Does a weight identity exist?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: If a weight identity exists, how is one's weight identity developed through communication?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: If a weight identity exists, in what types of situations is one's weight identity the salient identity?

RQ<sub>4</sub>: If a weight identity exists, how does one's actual weight influence one's weight identity?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

#### Overall Method and Design

This survey and interview-based study examined if a weight identity exists, how it is formed and how it is influenced through communication. To solicit participants, an online survey (see Appendix A) was created and distributed to women enrolled in the basic communication course in a large Midwestern university through the course Blackboard site.

The survey asked participants to describe physical and personality characteristics associated with underweight, average weight, overweight, and obese people as well as to describe themselves. They were also asked to use a sliding scale to indicate what percentages intelligence, sex, political beliefs, weight, personality, religious beliefs, and occupation each made up their identity. This was followed by Likert-scale items ranging from *not close at all* (1) to *very close* (5) that asked how closely they identified with others who have similar body shapes, sex, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and personality traits as themselves.

Finally, within the survey, participants were asked to provide their height and weight. This information was used to calculate their BMIs<sup>1</sup>. Participants were then divided into three groups based on their BMI – underweight (i.e., BMI below 18.5), average weight (i.e., BMI between 18.5-24.9), and overweight/obese (i.e., overweight BMI between 25-29.9; obese BMI 30.0 and above; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Once the four groups were established, the primary researcher contacted participants via e-mail in each category and asked if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview. To ensure accuracy, the interviews were digitally recorded, and the primary researcher took notes (for complete interview protocol,

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<sup>1</sup> BMI = (Weight in pounds \* 703) / height in inches<sup>2</sup>

see Appendix B). Once the interviews were completed, a transcription service was used to transcribe the data (Verbal Link, 2011). See Appendix F for complete interview transcripts.

At the end of the interviews, participants were given an opportunity to draw representations of each group (i.e., underweight, average weight, overweight, and obese). After participants drew these representations, they were asked to circle which of the drawings they felt represented herself (see Appendix C). If participants objected to drawing (i.e., they indicated that they “could not draw”), they were asked to list words that come to mind that describe those four physical states. Both the on-line survey and interview protocol methodologies were approved by the university Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E).

**Participants.** To understand the concept of weight identity, it is necessary to consider individuals with varying body types. Because most sufferers of eating disorders are female (The Alliance for Eating Disorder Awareness, 2010; Lucas, Beard, O’Fallon, & Kurland, 1988), this study focused on women. Females were recruited through the use of the Communication Studies research pool associated with the basic communication course. This pool of participants was chosen over others because the basic communication course is required for most majors at the university. Thus, it has the potential to provide a cross-section of university students. Students were offered research credit for participating in the survey and were asked to give their names and contact information so that they could receive the credit. Although they provided this information, they were assured that their information would be kept confidential.

Overall, 500 students participated in the online study. However, 101 surveys were thrown out due to incompleteness or ineligibility (e.g., a male participant), leaving the total number of surveys completed as 399. Female participants ranged in age from 19-48, with a mean age of 20.61 years ( $SD = 2.43$ ). Participants identified themselves as White ( $N = 328$ , 82%), Asian ( $N =$

17, 4%), Hispanic ( $N = 14$ , 3.5%), Native American ( $N = 1$ , 0.2%), and other ( $N = 9$ , 2%), with 33 (9%) not reporting.

The online study asked participants to provide their heights and weights, and this information was used to calculate their BMIs. Participants were then divided into three groups based on their BMI – underweight ( $N = 25$ ), average weight ( $N = 296$ ), overweight ( $N = 54$ ), and obese ( $N = 24$ ).

Once females were placed in these groups, an email was sent to 16 underweight females, 41 average weight females, 22 overweight, and 15 obese females, totaling 94 emails, asking for their participation in a follow-up interview. As incentive, participants were given the opportunity to complete their required research credits for the basic communication course or receive a small gift card to a local retailer. Of the 94 emails sent, 25 females (4 underweight, 11 average weight, and 8 overweight, and 2 obese) agreed to follow-up interviews. Due to the lack of obese participants, the overweight and obese categories were combined (for the interview protocol, see Appendices B and C).

Participants were interviewed by the primary researcher, who digitally recorded the interviews and took notes for accuracy. Interviews averaged 14 minutes and 50 seconds ( $SD = 00:5:44$ ), with a range between 00:07:11 and 00:27:48. Although participants were chosen to be interviewed based on their BMI, they were not informed of their BMI before or during the interview.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Research Question One: Weight Identity

The first research question (Does weight identity exist?) was answered using questions from both the survey and the interview. One of the survey questions consisted of sliding scale items that indicated to what percentage intelligence, sex, political beliefs, weight, personality, religious beliefs, and occupation made up the participants' identities. Overall, results revealed participants believed that personality made up the most of their identities ( $M = 82.02$ ,  $SD = 22.17$ ), followed by intelligence ( $M = 64.08$ ,  $SD = 24.30$ ), sex ( $M = 58.23$ ,  $SD = 32.38$ ), religious beliefs ( $M = 42.05$ ,  $SD = 33.69$ ), weight ( $M = 36.60$ ,  $SD = 29.28$ ), occupation ( $M = 33.37$ ,  $SD = 30.10$ ), and political beliefs ( $M = 25.33$ ,  $SD = 25.16$ ).

Similarly, Likert-scale items that asked how closely participants identified with others who have similar body shapes, sex, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and personality traits as themselves, were examined. Overall, results indicated that participants identified with personality ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), followed by intelligence ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), sex ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), religious beliefs ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), body shape ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), and political beliefs ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Moreover, questions from the interview were also used to investigate the first research question. These questions included a question about a person's physical description (see Appendix B, question 1), a question about their friends' body shapes (see Appendix B, question 2), a question regarding how one talks about weight (see Appendix B, question 6), a question about identification with others of their weight (see Appendix B, question 8), and a question about the importance of weight in their life (see Appendix B, question 9).

To analyze this data, thematic analysis was used. Themes were formed by what emerged within the discourse rather than pre-existing categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). To develop themes, the data was analyzed using Bulmer's (1979) method in which the discourse was examined for themes, and then those themes were tested against additional data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Themes were chosen for the data based on number of occurrences as well as strength of the statements. The first research question was also examined through the drawings participants drew at the end of their interviews.

**Overall themes of descriptions of self.** For the first interview question, common themes were found throughout all of the data as well as in the individual BMI groups. One theme that was common across all of the BMI groups was that of health.

***Health.*** The theme of health was present in six of the 25 interviews (4 underweight, 11 average weight, and 10 overweight and obese). Those who mentioned health framed it in terms of fitness. When talking about fitness, participants either described themselves as being fit or unfit.

***Being fit.*** Those who talked about health in terms of fitness spoke about regarding being in shape. Only one participant, Kara<sup>2</sup>, an underweight female, viewed herself as being physically in shape. Kara said in response to the question, "How would you describe yourself physically?" "I would say pretty healthy. I exercise regularly, but I wouldn't say too thin or too heavy or anything like that."

***Being unfit.*** However, unlike Kara, when most of the women talked about themselves in terms of health and fitness, they referenced not being as in shape as they would like. Wendy, an average weight female, stated, "I'd say I'm decent. I'm pretty in shape. I'm not toned, guess I'd

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<sup>2</sup> Participants names were given pseudonyms protect confidentiality.



say, but in shape.” And another average weight female, Ashley, said, “I say I’m in physically good shape. I’m thin. I’m definitely not in shape, I don’t do strenuous exercise, but I wouldn’t consider myself overweight by any means.” Similarly, Amie, an overweight female, said:

Physically, I would probably describe myself as not very healthy right now. I used to play a lot of sports in high school, middle school, and in just like the past half of my senior year, and summer in college, I’ve put on weight, so I’m not very – I don’t feel very healthy right now because I’m used to being much more active.

Also, another overweight female, Sherrie, said:

I would say that, for the most part, I’m healthy, but I would still like to lose some weight and be more in shape. But I’d say that I feel like I’m able – I’m not limited to do anything by my body shape.

**Height.** In addition to health, height was also an overall theme found in the interviews. Height was mentioned by seven of the 25 participants (4 underweight, 11 average weight, and 10 overweight and obese). For example, Kara, an underweight female, described herself as saying, “[I’m] definitely tall. I stand out, that’s for sure.” An average weight female, Phyllis said, “I’m kind of short. I would probably definitely still say that I’m short, because I am. I’m pretty short.” An overweight female, Amanda, said, “I think I’m pretty short. My little brother says I have the height of a small child.” Another overweight female, Emily, said, “I would say that I’m tall. I am very tall – six feet tall.”

**BMI group themes of descriptions of self.** In addition to overall themes, each BMI category was examined for common themes.

***Underweight descriptions of self.*** Among the underweight participants ( $N = 4$ ), two themes emerged – the theme of thinness and justifying that thinness.

*Thinness.* All ( $N = 4$ ) of the underweight participants described themselves as thin in some way. Mandi said, “[I’m] Skinny. I don’t know, kind of like, gangly, or a little awkward.” Kara said, “[I’m] Thin.” Susan said, “I’m pretty thin.” And Jennifer said, “Physically, I would say that I would be pretty skinny.”

*Qualifying or explaining thinness.* Another theme that was found among the underweight participants was justifying their body shape. After describing themselves as thin, three of the underweight participants followed up the statements indicating *why* they were that way. Kara said, “But I wouldn’t say too thin or too heavy or anything like that.” Susan said, “[I’m] just naturally thin. I’ve always been that way. It runs in my family.” And Jennifer said, “[I’m] not too skinny. Just average looking. I’m pretty average all around – height, light, I mean, height-wise too.”

*Average weight descriptions of self.* With the average weight participants ( $N = 11$ ), two themes also emerged – being normal or average and disliking one’s body. The first theme of being “normal or average” was similar to the underweight participants’ description of themselves.

*Normal or Average.* Eight out of 11 of the average weight participants indicated that they had a normal body type. For example, Erin said, “I think it’s normal and the highest level of normal.” Jessica said, “I’d probably say that I’m fairly average.” Gabrielle said, “Oh, I don’t know. I’d say I’m just normal.” And Kristine said, “I would say that I’m pretty normal except for I like to dress weird.”

*Disliking one’s body.* Another theme also emerged within the average weight participants’ responses. This theme dealt with disliking one’s body, and two out of the 11 subjects mentioned it. Julie said, “I guess I’m reasonably good to look at. But I have a lot of

insecurities about the weight of my thighs in specific and the little pooch everyone has. So definitely some weight issues.” In addition, Gini, an average weight female, said:

I wouldn’t say overweight, but I would say there’s definitely a lot of things I don’t like about my weight. I just feel like I’m chubby. I don’t have a flat stomach. I’m constantly looking at my midsection area, but I wouldn’t say I’m overweight, but I would say I’m not at the weight I want to be.

***Overweight and obese descriptions of self.*** Among the overweight and obese participants, the main theme that occurred in all but one of the 10 interviews was the theme of being above the norm regarding weight. For example, Emily said, “[I have a] normal body weight – maybe a little bit above what most people would think.” Sara stated, “I don’t think I’m obese, but I do think I have some weight to lose.” Hema said, “I think there’s aspects of my body that are pretty, but like there’s obviously places that need improvement.” And Amanda noted, “I wouldn’t say fat necessarily, but chubby. A little bigger than I’d like to be.”

**Descriptions of friends’ body shapes.** In addition to being asked to describe themselves physically, participants were also asked to describe their friends’ body shapes.

***Underweight descriptions of friends’ body shapes.*** Within the underweight category, the theme of being thinner than their friends emerged, with two out of the four women mentioning it. Jennifer said:

I mean, kind of. My like, close – I’m thinking of like, my closet friends. They – I mean, she has like a totally different body type as me, but I would say that I’m pretty, like, petite compared to my friends but not in way that I’m like, you know. I don’t want to be like, bragging.

And Mandi said:

Let's see. The guys range from – I don't think I have really any skinny guy friends, but just, like, from – I don't know, I hesitate to say normal, but just, like, typical kind of slightly built and short to, like, I don't know, bigger, rounder guys, I guess. My female friends, well, let's see, I don't really have any female friends. Some of the girls I see – or the girls I hang out with, well, I guess just like in relation to me, like, less skinny, I guess. More typical, more, like, curvy and – I don't know.

The other underweight participants said their friends were average (Kara) or had varying body types (Susan).

*Average weight descriptions of friends' body shapes.* Of the average weight participants, the answers varied in terms of how these women described their friends' body shapes. The two themes that emerged were having friends with various body types and having friends who were bigger than the participants.

*Various body types.* Some participants talked about how their friends have various body shapes. Of the 11 average weight interviews, two mentioned having friends with varying body types. Ashley said:

I have two sets of friends. I either have all the girls that are really tall, busty, but heavier girls, and then I have the other girls that are way past over shape who work out every day or run marathons and put me to shame. I actually don't hang out with many girls who are not my size, which is kind of odd.

And Gabrielle stated, "It's different, you know. Some are more curvy, and some are skinny, some are tall, short."

*Friends bigger than participants.* Another theme that emerged among the average weight participants was having friends who were bigger. Of the 11 interviews, five discussed

having friends who were bigger than they were. Julie noted, “I don’t think any of them are fat but I don’t really think that they’re healthy.” Jessica said, “Average to slightly overweight.” And Kristine stated, “I do have one friend that’s really, really big.”

*Friends the same size as participants.* Another theme that emerged was having friends who are the same size. Out of the 11 average weight interviews, three of the participants mentioned having friends the same size. Erin said, “Approximately they are near my size.” Phyllis stated, “They’re generally around my size. I mean, I have a few friends that are bigger and I have friends that are smaller, so - but I’d say they’re all usually my size.” And Gini noted, “I would say they’re normal too.”

***Overweight and obese friends’ body types.*** Like the average weight responses, two themes emerged with the overweight and obese responses, including having friends with various body types and having friends who were smaller than they were.

*Various body types.* As with the average weight participants’ answers, the theme of having friends with various body types was also present among the overweight and obese participants. Three out of the eight participants discussed having friends with various body shapes. For example, Sara noted, “They’re all different.” Abby said, “Body shape? I have a wide variety of friends with body shape. So, but – all shapes and sizes: Tall, skinny, pear, overweights, what – I mean that’s a loose term, but yeah.” And Hema stated, “It really varies a lot. Because I’m obviously not the skinniest person ever, but they’re either like overweight or like not underweight but average. They’re like your ideal person.”

*Friends smaller than participants.* Four out of the eight responses reflected that the overweight and obese participants had friends who were smaller than they were. Emily said, “They are all short. They are all short and they are all very thin. I don’t know how that

happened. I don't have any friends who are overweight. I don't know how that happened, either." Mary noted, "I would say that most of them are very skinny." Sherrie stated, "Probably most of my closest friends are a little smaller than me, but there are some that are about the same size." And Amie said:

My best friend has like this perfect hourglass figure that just inspires envy every time you look at her, and for the most part most of my friends are pretty thin. A lot of them were pretty athletic in high school, and my best friend did cross country. One of my other friends is a gymnast, so around kind of those tiny girls.

**Talking about weight.** To understand if weight identity exists, participants were also asked questions about with whom they talk to about their weight. Themes emerged for each BMI category group.

***Underweight participants talking about weight.*** Underweight participants discussed talking about their weight with either their parents and friends or not talking about their weight.

***Parents and friends.*** Two underweight participants mentioned that they talked about their weight with parents and friends. For example, Mandi stated, "It depends. When – like, if I get my weight – if I, like, find out, like, how much I weigh and it's, like, significantly lower than 120, I'll, like, talk about it to my mom and to, like, my friends and stuff." And Jennifer said, "Either my mom or like, my roommates or my close friends."

***Not discussing weight.*** On the other hand, two underweight participants noted that they did not talk about their weight. Kara said, "Not really that much unless I'm at the doctor, or something like this, but I don't really talk about it other than that." And Susan said:

I try to avoid it 'cause I live in – mostly because I'm usually in my hall – my girl's scholarship hall and people get really mad sometimes – you know, like it's just a hard

thing especially because so many girls are, you know, going to the rec every day and trying to eat right, but I just, at this point – I know that some day it's going to catch up with me – but I just – I don't exercise really, I don't watch what I eat. I just kind of do whatever and it works out at this point. And I'm sure I'm gonna hit getting middle age and be like, "Oh my god! I need to work out or something!"

***Average weight participants talking about weight.*** Like the underweight participants, the average weight participants also mentioned friends as well as roommates. In addition, the average weight participants also noted that they spoke to their significant other about their weight.

***Friends and roommates.*** Three of the 11 participants said they talked about their weight with friends and roommates. Phyllis said, "My roommate and I talk about it all day – or a lot – because we're, you know, getting ready for spring break. But I mean, other than that with anyone else, not really. Not too much." Gini stated, "Either, like, my older sister or my roommate." And Alex noted:

I guess kind of fairly often just with my roommates and stuff as kind of – one of my roommates kind of recently was like, "None of my clothes are fitting me anymore."

Then, our other roommate who we're kind of worried about, we try to encourage things or be like, "Hey, you really could stand to gain a few pounds." Every couple of days, I guess.

***Significant other.*** However, the most prevalent theme, being mentioned five times by the average weight participants ( $N = 11$ ), was speaking about weight with a significant other.

Ashley said, "My boyfriend, obviously, and, of course, he's very supportive, 'You look great.'"

Julie noted:

I talk about it with my boyfriend a lot. I don't talk about it with my family at all. But I talk about it with my boyfriend specifically in terms of I don't feel healthy. I feel like if I'm healthy I would look a certain way, so I can't possibly be healthy.

And Jessica stated, "Probably right now, I talk about it fairly regularly. Maybe a couple times a week with my husband. We both are kind of trying to lose weight."

***Overweight and obese participants talking about weight.*** With the overweight and obese categories, three themes emerged. These included talking about weight with family members, significant others, and friends.

*Family member.* The first theme involved talking to a family member about weight. Three out of the 10 overweight and obese participants mentioned they talked about their weight with a family member, specifically their mother. In addition, one participant, Amanda, talked about discussing weight with her brother as well, saying, "I talk about it with my mom and my mom is pretty much the same shape as I do – we have the exact same thighs. Then, my little brother, he just shot up, so he's still – he's husky and he's not even pudgy anymore."

*Significant other.* In addition to family members, two overweight and obese females also talked about their weight with their significant others. Abby said, "Really, I mainly talk with my fiancée about it." And Emily stated, "Oh, I don't know. It depends on who I'm with. I would say, often with my husband. He's also overweight."

*Friends.* In addition, three overweight and obese participants out of 10 noted that they spoke about their weight with their female friends. When talking about weight with friends, the participants noted that they primarily talk about wanting to lose weight. Sherrie brought this up by saying:



With my friends and stuff, maybe a couple times a day. It depends – I have a friend that we go running a lot, so sometimes I’ll talk about that. Or I’ll mention to my roommate – she’ll be like, “You’re working out a lot.” I’m like, “I want to lose weight,” or something like that.

**How often they talk about weight.** In addition to asking them who they talk about their weight with, participants were also asked how often they talk about their weight.

***Underweight participants’ frequencies of talking about weight.*** Those in the underweight category noted that they did not talk about their weight a lot. Jennifer stated, “My weight? Not very often. Every once in a while, but I feel like that’s pretty normal.” They indicated that they the only time they talk about it were times when someone else mentioned it first, such as the doctor or their friends. And some try to avoid talking about their weight. For example, Susan said, “I try to avoid it ‘cause I live in – mostly because I’m usually in my hall – my girl’s scholarship hall and people get really mad sometimes.”

***Average weight participants’ frequencies of talking about weight.*** Average weight participants either talked about their weight regularly or not a lot.

***Talking about weight regularly.*** Six out of the 11 average weight participants noted that they talked about their weight regularly. Gini said, “I’d say a lot. I think it’s more than I probably should. It’s usually always on my mind, I guess you could say.” Similarly, Julie noted, “I talk about it with my boyfriend a lot.” Phyllis added, “My roommate and I talk about it all day – or a lot...” And Jessica stated, “Probably right now, I talk about it fairly regularly.”

***Not talking about weight.*** On the other hand, four average weight participants said they did not talk about their weight on a regular basis, with some indicating that they do not like to talk about their weight and avoid it, others saying that they only talk about their weight when in a

medical setting, and one referring to not being comfortable speaking about it with heavier people. Ashley said:

I don't think I talk as much about it. Unfortunately, I am very skinny for my family, because both of my parents are heavier, so if I open my mouth to my family, they're like, "Shut up Ashley, you're just so skinny." I don't feel that way, so I've kind of just learned to keep it to myself even if I don't feel I'm physically the way I should be because I'm better off than most of my family.

***Overweight and obese participants' frequencies of talking about weight.*** Like the average weight category, the overweight and obese category also said they talked about their varied in how often they talked about their weight.

*Talking about weight regularly.* Five out of the 10 overweight and obese participants noted that they talked about their weight regularly. Participants mentioned that they primarily talked about their weight in terms of being unhappy with their current body shape. Abby said:

More lately. I've started realizing, oh, I am getting overweight. I notice it in my body and stuff. So I have been mentioning it a lot lately. When I was underweight – I had mentioned in the survey that I was underweight and – I would talk about it a little bit but it was more of a concern of, I need to do something about this. And it's amazing that stress and worrying can put you underweight. So I would, hey. And it was more towards my parents and stuff – I need to go to the doctor and see what we can do about this. But – or, I would just make the comment, "I feel like a shriveled prune." So, but more lately, it's like, "Oh my goodness. I can't believe the changes and stuff. And I need to do something about this."

And Amanda said:

I've been trying to cut back. It is something me and my roommate just talked about. She is like, "You spend too much time in front of the mirror just looking at yourself." It is something that I have been a little preoccupied with and something I think about a lot.

*Not talking weight.* In addition, two overweight and obese participants noted they did not talk about their weight often. These participants did not consider weight to be a big concern in their life. Kristin said:

Never, I don't think. I have no idea how much I weigh. I go to the gym not because I think I necessarily need to lose weight or put on muscle weight – I just feel better after I go to the gym. It's not like I'm like, "I'm burning calories to be more thin." I go because I want to. But, yeah, I never...

And Amie noted:

Not often. I'm a little more private about it. I'm like, it's my thing to deal with, and I'll figure it out. A lot of my friends will be like, "I'm so fat. I put on five pounds." I'm like, "Okay, that's cool. I wouldn't tell anybody that, but alrighty."

**Not comfortable talking about weight.** Participants were also asked with whom they are *not* comfortable talking about their weight.

*Underweight not comfortable talking about weight.* Three out of the four underweight participants noted that they were willing to talk about their weight with anyone. They indicated that if it was brought up, it would not be uncomfortable. Mandi said:

Not really anyone. There are some people who I wouldn't – like, I just wouldn't talk about it, like my dad or my stepdad. But, like, I don't think it would be uncomfortable. It just doesn't really come up, besides, you know, "You're skinny, let's go out to eat."

***Average weight not comfortable talking about weight.*** Some average weight participants also noted that they were willing to talk about their weight with anyone, while others said they would be uncomfortable talking about their weight with their families.

*Willing to talk about weight with anyone.* The average weight participants also noted that they were comfortable talking about their weight with others. Four out of the 11 average weight participants indicated that they were open about talking about their weight, with Wendy saying, “I honestly don’t think so. Pretty open about that.”

*Uncomfortable talking about weight with family.* However, three average weight participants noted that they were uncomfortable talking about their weight, specifically with their families. Julie said:

I’m not really comfortable talking about my weight in front of my family, my mom or my dad specifically. Well, they’re both kind of overweight so if I ever bring up any of my own concerns, it’s kind of just – they blow me off. “Oh, you’re so thin.” And, “You don’t even have to worry about it.” I mean, everybody has to worry about it.

***Overweight and obese not comfortable talking about weight.*** Two themes were found with the overweight and obese participants regarding with whom they are not comfortable discussing weight. Some overweight and obese participants noted that they were not comfortable talking about weight with family and with friends.

*Uncomfortable talking about weight with family.* Like the average weight participants, two of the overweight and obese participants noted being uncomfortable talking about their weight with their family members. Kristin noted:

My mom and dad – they’re not gonna be like – it’s not that they don’t want to hear it, they just are like – they don’t think there’s anything wrong with me. I know that they would just be like, “You’re fine. You’re great,” which is good to hear.

*Uncomfortable talking about weight with friends.* However, four out of 10 overweight and obese participants notes that they were uncomfortable talking about their weight to their friends because their friends were thinner than they were and thus did not understand how they could be overweight or obese. For example, Sara noted, “Probably my best friend just because she doesn’t really understand, because she’s one of those people that can usually eat whatever she wants and still be tiny.” Emily said, “My friends, especially since they’re all skinny. They just don’t get it because they don’t have any problems with their weight. They’re just naturally thin, most of them.” And Amie said:

Probably just my friends because I feel like – I know they don’t judge me for how I look at all, but there’s still that little feeling like, when I’m discussing how I’m dealing with my weight, they’re not dealing with the same kind of issues because they’re not at the same weight that I am. They’re not dealing with how to lose larger amounts of weight. When they’re trying, their goal is, “I’m going to lose five pounds.”

**Identifying with others of their shape.** In addition, participants were asked about identifying with others of their shape during the interview.

*Underweight participants identifying with others of their shape.* All ( $N = 4$ ) of the underweight participants varied in their responses to identifying with others of their shape, providing mixed yes and no answers. Jennifer said, “I mean, in a sense, I guess. I don’t really...” while Susan stated:

Probably like, on a very superficial extent just because like, you know, you look through your magazine and it's like, if you look like this, this is what you should wear. And I'm like, "We look good in the same thing." You know, it's like kind of like, on a more superficial level, but I mean, I don't see someone and I'm like, "You should be my friend because we look similar." Like, not – I'm not that way.

***Average weight participants identifying with others of their shape.*** Unlike the underweight participants, the average weight participants answered affirmatively, indicated that they did identify with others of their shape or that they did not identify with others of their shape.

*Identify with others of their shape.* Four out of the 11 average weight participants indicated they did identify with those who have a similar shape. Jessica state in response to the question, "Sometimes. Yeah, usually I do." And Alex summarized these responses by saying:

Yeah, definitely, for some odd reason – I don't know why. I just kind of feel like – I consider myself a fairly fit person, so if someone has a similar shape, "What do you do?" So it gives you something in common, I feel like.

*Do not identify with others of their shape.* However, four of the eleven average weight participants answered that they did not identify with others who have a similar shape. Phyllis noted, "I wouldn't say, like, I'm only, like, drawn to people of my size, because I do have friends that are bigger, smaller. So it doesn't – I don't really have a preference, I guess I would say." And Ashley said:

Not really. I feel like a lot of people who tend to be my weight tend to be more athletic and actually go out and do sports and stuff. I play no sports. I do not run for enjoyment. I am the person who has the giant tennis ball I throw to my dog while I sit in a chair and watch it run.

***Overweight and obese participants identifying with others of their shape.*** Like the average weight participants, the overweight and obese participants also answered affirmatively.

*Identify with others of their shape.* Some ( $N = 5$ ) overweight and obese participants said they did identify with those who have a similar shape. Emily responded, “I do. I don’t know – I don’t know how I don’t have any more friends who are overweight. I have – my husband is overweight and his sister is overweight, and I love his sister.” And Amanda demonstrated this by stating:

Yeah, I guess so because me and my roommate look oddly alike and we’ve been best friends since high school. There’s one kid on our floor that still calls me her name. We worked at the same place and people would come in and be like, “Sisters working at the same Subway.” I guess that I’m kind of drawn to people that look more like me. But then another one of my friends, she’s five foot even and tiny. I guess she’s the exception. But I think that in general I feel more comfortable when I’m not with someone that’s 110 pounds.

*Do not identify with others of their shape.* On the other hand, other ( $N = 2$ ) participants said they did not identify with others of their shape. Amie said, “I don’t think so. I don’t really ever think about, ‘Oh, that person is the same general shape as me. They might be cool.’”

**Importance of weight.** In addition to questions about identifying with others of their shape, participants were also asked about the importance of weight in their lives.

***Underweight importance of weight.*** Three of the four underweight participants noted that weight was important to them. Mandi said:

I would have to say it’s more important than I wish it was. I identify, like, as a skinny person. Like, being tall and thin, like, that is what I ascribe to as, like, personal traits of

mine that are attractive, you know? ... So it's, like – and, like, societally acceptable personal traits, like, and I have those. Like, I'm fortunate or unfortunate, whatever. Like, I happen to fit in with what society wants women to look like in that respect. Like, not in – not in all respects, like, but in that particular way. ... Yeah, and like I said, it does make me feel, like, special sometimes, so it's somewhat important, I guess. I guess I'd be the same person if I didn't – but, I mean, I've just never been, so I don't know, you know?

Likewise, Susan said:

I mean, I guess it sounds kind of dumb, but kind of important just – once again, though, more on a superficial level, just 'cause I think since other people – I've always - like, who I've known for a long time have always identified me as like, being very thin. It like kind of – like, I don't know. It reflects back like kind of, from me because that's what they think.

***Average weight importance of weight.*** Average weight participants said weight was both important and unimportant.

***Weight as important.*** Five of the 11 average weight participants indicated that weight was important to them. Ashley said, “Sadly, it's really important. With my parents, it's just always been a top priority and now my job is going to go into sales, so now I feel even more needy to be in good physical shape.” Gini stated, “It's really a huge part to me. And I hate to say it but it is. I was never that concerned with it until like I said, about a year ago. It became like a huge focal point in my life.” And Erin noted, “I think it's very important. It gives me the confidence when it is the ideal weight.”



*Weight as unimportant.* Four of the 11 average weight participants indicated that weight was not important. Phyllis said, “Yeah. It’s not terribly important. I don’t – I’m not – if I’m overweight or underweight, that’s not a huge issue to me. But...” And Alex said:

I don’t know if it’s a huge part, but I do enjoy playing soccer at the rec or doing things like that, so I feel like if I were to stop that and my weight would change, I feel like I would kind of be a different person. So I guess in that regard, it changes who I am, but it’s not a huge aspect. One of my roommates has diabetes. She literally – she can’t help it, it’s not a part of her or who she is or anything. I guess it kind of just depends on the circumstance.

***Overweight and obese importance of weight.*** Overweight and obese participants also had indicated that weight was both important and unimportant in their lives.

*Weight as important.* Four out of 10 overweight and obese participants said that weight was important to who they were. Abby said:

I’m noticing, especially getting a little overweight that it’s starting to take hold of like, oh, well – the whole concern thing. But really, I – I mean, I’ll look in my mirror, especially when I dress up nice, and like, oh. Or the pants don’t fit that used to or – and it will concern me, but it’s like, oh well, you know.

Likewise, Amanda noted:

I’d almost say that the curves kind of make me because I’m pretty talkative and I like to be social and I don’t think I necessarily stand out, but I’ve finally gotten to where I’m getting comfortable with it because I was real quiet and real shy in high school and I don’t know if it was college or what, but I’m starting to get more comfortable and more

outgoing, and I think – the curves and everything kind of add to it. I think it makes my personality almost a little bigger and I think that's what I like about it, I think.

*Weight as unimportant.* On the other hand, three of the 10 overweight and obese participants noted that it was unimportant to who they are. Amie indicated this by saying:

I don't think it's very important. Obviously it limits me in some ways, like I'm not as active right now as I normally am, so that influences how often I go play pickup games of soccer, because when I'm in that environment, I feel like I should be so much more in shape and be able to do so many more things that I'm not doing. Just shopping is not as enjoyable I guess, so that affects how I act, because the stores I shop at aren't always the same stores my friends shop at, or when they're shopping they're like, "You should try this on." I'm like, "That's not really my size." It's like flattering in that way, like, I'm glad you think I can fit in that, but I can't.

And Kristin said:

Not important. I think my personality's so strong it doesn't matter. My boyfriend, he texted me, he was like, "Ha ha, looking at old Facebook pictures of you." I was like, "No, I was chubby junior year." He was like, "No, you weren't." Obviously, if it's not important to people I'm hanging out with, it's not important to me. I don't think it's important.

**Drawings of different weight categories.** Participants were also asked to draw representations of what they felt an underweight, average weight, overweight, and obese person looks like. There were some overall themes for the drawings. In most of the drawings, participants' figures heights increased as weights increased. In addition, weight was shown to

increase in the midsection area. For examples, see Figures 1-16 in Appendix D. In addition, for a complete list of themes for research question one, see Table 1 in Appendix D.

## **Research Question Two: Weight Identity and Communication**

The second research question, which examined communication's role in the development and sustainment of one's weight identity, was addressed through a series of questions regarding comments one has heard about her weight in the past (see Appendix B, question 3). In addition, participants were asked to recall the best conversation they have ever had about their weight (see Appendix B, question 9c) as well as the worst conversation they have ever had about their weight (see Appendix B, question 9d).

**Past comments about weight.** Participants were first asked about comments they had heard about their weight and how those comments made them feel. Comments could be positive or negative and could be at any point in the past from when they were a child up until the interview.

***Underweight participants' past comments about weight.*** For underweight females, three of the four heard comments about being too thin. Kara said:

People ask me why I'm so thin, and make assumptions, but it's really because I ran cross country in high school. I think that was a big reason why I'm just thin. It's not like I purposely was trying to be this skinny.

When asked how these comments made her feel, Kara replied:

It's fine if they say it once in a while, but sometimes it will get a little frustrating, like in the summer if I'm wearing tank tops or something like that. They're like, "Oh. You could use a burger." I don't know. I'm just like, it gets kind of annoying.

Another example was from Susan, who noted:

I used to – not so much anymore, but I used to be skinnier and people would, you know, like try to tell – be like, “Are you eating?” And kind of like to try to, I don’t know – save me or something but, I didn’t have any eating disorders or anything so there wasn’t really anything to do. But yeah, and I’ve had people talk to my parents before. I mean, I wasn’t like super offended, but it was just kind of like, I always – I always looked at it, as like, you wouldn’t go to someone and be like, “You really need to like, watch your daughter’s weight. She’s looking kind of fat today.” So like, I don’t know. I thought it was rude mostly, I guess, that someone would think that they knew what was going on in someone else’s life kind of.

And Mandi stated:

I’ve been hearing I was skinny and, like, just, like, narrow build my entire life. My mom said I was bony. Yeah, yeah. Never in, like, really negative ways. Just, like, bony was probably the most negative. And people have always told me to, like, eat more and just, like, inquiring about, like, if I’m unhealthily skinny. That’s more been – I don’t know, like, that’s really more been in the last several years, though. When I was younger, I don’t really know, besides, like, tall and little. ... Unfortunately, they do make me feel a little bit special. And, like, I know I should be getting that kind of feeling in other more positive ways, but when people are concerned and they’re just, like, “You’re dangerously skinny,” sometimes it’s, like – I don’t know. Like, it’s such – it’s so pervasive that you’re – that you should be skinny, and so it’s, like – and, like, even though I’m, like, all feminist-y and women’s studies and stuff, like, it’s still, like, yeah, I do conform to, like, that sort of feeling. I don’t know. Something kind of to work on, but, you know – ...

[These comments make me feel] Special in a good way. I don’t know, I know it’s really

unhealthy to feel this way, but, like, when people are concerned about, like, my BMI and stuff. Like, I don't know, I feel, like, comfortable in my body or whatever, except for the lack of curves. That's kind of a problem. But, like, I don't know, it's nice that people are concerned about that. I don't know.

***Average weight participants' past comments about weight.*** Average weight participants primarily recalled negative comments about their weight, and these comments were about being either overweight or underweight.

*Overweight comments.* Six out of the 11 average weight participants recalled being told they were overweight by peers and parents. Julie said:

In junior high there was a girl who was really mean to me about weight, braces, and all sorts of physical traits 'cause I was in cheerleading. So, there's definitely another cheerleader who always said I was like, too heavy and too big.

When asked how these comments made her feel, Julie responded:

At the time, I kind of walked past it but I realized, like, earlier this year that it's like stuck with me ever since then. The like – cheerleaders gave me a makeover, and until that point I didn't feel good about myself at all. And that's kind of like stuck with me. I don't like that it's stuck with me.

When asked if anyone had commented on her weight, Erin said:

Yes. I went through a stage that my weight increased – I reached 78 kilos – that was horrible for me, but it was for like two years, but then I controlled and returned to normal. Even my family – my father – go, "You look fat" and thing.

Erin also noted that she felt:

Unsatisfied with myself. Since then, I'm always afraid of my weight. I'm trying to control – I'm trying to be lower, but no way – especially when I got pregnant, my weight is increasing and increased very, very much over the normal, so that in the last months, all my concentration wasn't to the delivery. It was hard to lose my weight after the birth of my baby.

Ashley had a similar experience, noting who commented about her weight and the effects of those comments.

Yeah, my dad actually [commented about my weight]. When I was in like junior high I was a bit heavier and shorter. He was very, "You could work out a little more. You could do a little more, Ashley," and I'm like, "Okay, dad. Thanks for the confidence boost in life." [It made me feel] Pretty bad. My dad was not – he's never been a very encouraging person when it comes to physical appearance. But it definitely did leave some problems in my life and whatnot. I did become anorexic for quite a bit of time during high school. I would pretty much eat a piece of bread for breakfast, skip lunch, and then kind of nibble on crackers or something in the afternoon. I did that for a year or two and it didn't really change my weight crazy because obviously I'm not crazy heavy, but it definitely did affect me. I know some of my friends noticed and it was bad.

*Underweight comments.* However, three of the 11 average weight participants noted that they heard comments about being too thin from both family members and friends. Amber stated, "My family always said my twin sister and I were too skinny. And sometimes my friends would say that I was too skinny." When asked how those comments made her feel, she noted that they made her feel "Bad. Kind of mad." Similarly, Gabrielle said:

I used to be really, really, really skinny and like he would always like say – like, my brother would always say, “I’m boney, boney.” Yeah. And friends and things like that would say, “Gain weight.”

When noting how these comments made her feel, Gabrielle replied, “I didn’t like it, you know because to me, I mean, I didn’t – I was just skinny. I couldn’t help that. So it made me feel bad.”

***Overweight and obese participants’ past comments about weight.*** The overweight and obese participants heard messages framed in terms of health as well as negative messages from family and peers.

*Messages framed about health.* Four out of the 10 interviews with overweight and obese participants commented they heard messages that talked about their weight in terms of their health. For example, Hema said regarding past comments about her weight:

When I used to be a lot heavier at the beginning of the summer and I lost weight and like people noticed that. And like my grandma will notice if I’ve lost weight or – but I mean in a non-conceited way I think that my personality outweighs physical characteristics. And I think that because I have – I like to think this of myself and I’ve heard it from other people too so I’m not like making it up, but I think that a lot of times – my mom always says this. You could be 500 pounds, you could be 90 pounds. It’s your personality and the way you present yourself. If you’re clean, polished person, you’re going to come off as a – someone’s going to want to talk to you. Whereas if you’re like shlubby and fat and – not fat, that’s not a nice word. But like you know, fat is the right word though if you’re like fat and you don’t take care of yourself and it’s just how you present yourself. And I think that’s what probably answers that question best is that if I’m on that downfall,

which I have been at points, whether due to stress or due to situations with friends, or like right now I'm stressed, but like I think those would be the only times when people have really commented. When they don't see me using that highest potential of personality.

When indicating how those comments made her feel, Hema said:

I mean – the thing is I wouldn't say that – it's like my grandma when she's comparing you to my other cousins, so it's like annoying. But when – if it's a comparing situation it's very annoying and it's hurtful. But if it's constructive criticism situation, where it's like my mom saying it for my health? Like this summer my mom and I did a lot of work out classes together and made sure that I came to college with a healthy lifestyle. Forgot what I was going to tell you. Then it makes me feel good. But when I'm at the point where she's telling that it's something bad – you know, I like to think that it's – I try to make it a positive situation.

Moreover, Amie discussed the following:

No one, like friends in school, no one has ever made a comment to me. In my family they have. My parents would always make comments because we were a very athletic family, so if I was starting to gain weight they would worry, or they would be like, "Hey. You need to get in shape for season." It was just kind of to try and motivate me to get going I guess. I guess the most comments I got were from my parents, or from younger siblings, like if you're in the middle of a really heated fight, they're like, "Let me just throw out this barb to insult her." My mom would always just be like, "I think you're putting on a little weight, honey." She would try and be nice about it, but it was like, "Um, okay. Thanks mom. Did you have a good day?" My dad would be like – we'd go through pictures and he'd pull out, "Look. Come look. Here's your soccer picture.



When are we going to see that girl again?" My dad was like the one guy that was trying to get you so mad at him that you would do something. That's how he would motivate us when he would train us. He'd be like, "I want you to be so angry at me that you're just going to play better."

Amie then noted, regarding how these comments made her feel:

I would get pretty defensive, and I think it was because I'm the oldest but I was one of the kids that struggled most with weight. I would be in shape through season, but I would always be little bit bigger than everyone else. I could do my sport, and I could get through the running and everything. I was always that person. I was highly competitive, and I was determined that I was not going to be the last person in sprints. I would push myself a lot harder, but I was always bigger than my younger sister who is like two years younger, and my brothers who have these metabolisms that they eat something, then burn it off, then they're hungry again. They just don't gain anything, but they're eating entire pizzas by themselves.

*Negative messages.* In addition to messages about health, overweight and obese participants also noted that they heard negative messages about their weight. Two participants noted that they were called names by their peers in relation to their weight. Emily commented by saying, "Mostly, it was in high school. And it was fat ass, I think, was the big one. And then I grew to be six feet and they stopped talking about me, so. It was mainly one boy named Frank. He was a popular guy, so. He started it and then it kind of went around." She then said these comments made her feel, "Insignificant. It just didn't feel – it's like no matter how smart I am or anything else, it doesn't matter." In addition, Sherrie said:

I remember when I was in second or third grade – someone called me a fatty, but I was kind of offended, but it was just kind of the type of guy too who'd just say something rude like that. That didn't really get me too much. But not too much, no.

When asked how these comments made her feel, she noted, "It made me feel sad, I guess. I don't know if I'd say offended – I don't know. It was a long time ago, so I don't remember. But I remember it kind of woke me up a little bit."

**Best conversation about weight.** After questions about their general weight, participants were asked to recall the best conversation they had ever had about their weight.

***Underweight participants' best conversation about weight.*** Only one theme emerged within the underweight participants' responses. This theme involved the participants being fine as they are. For example, Jennifer said:

The best? You mean, just in general? I mean, obviously it's nice to like, be compliments or to say – like my mom always tells me, she's like, if I ever complain about me – she's always like, "You look fine just the way you are." Like, "you don't need to gain any weight or you don't need to lose anymore, but if you do then it's okay." I've never been really criticized about – I've been blessed in that way, I guess.

Susan supported this notion by stating:

Hmm. Probably either, like, maybe with my mom when I was younger, like, kind of about those things of like – like people saying something to my parents or something and her being like, "No, it's fine, you're beautiful." Blah blah well – that kind of thing.

What moms say. Or like, maybe with my boyfriend and just because sometimes I'll like – I am just like, a very sarcastic kind of like person, so we just all like make comments of like, "Well, back in, you know, the day, I was viewed as like, ugly and I would have died

because I was, you know, skinny and didn't have the weight." And he'll just – he's just very nice about it and is like, "No, you're beautiful." And all of that kind of thing, so.

*Average weight participants' best conversation about weight.* Average weight participants noted that their best conversations involved someone telling them they looked good or telling them they had lost weight.

*Looking good.* Four of the 11 average weight participants noted that getting complimented about their appearance was a positive conversation they had experienced regarding the topic of their weight. Wendy said, "Probably when someone told me I looked good and I was like, "Really?" 'Cause I didn't think so. It's probably sometimes just getting a compliment." And Gini said:

I don't know – this is so dumb, but there's this guy at my high school. He plays baseball here at [the university], actually. And he was like this big, he was like the hot shot, everyone liked him and whatnot, and it was after – it was last year New Year's Eve, so early beginning of this year when I just lost all my weight and I'd seen him on New Year's Eve and then hadn't seen him for awhile. And he gave me a big hug and he was like oh my gosh you look so great! He was like what happened? And I don't know why, but that just sticks out. I mean he would say hey and we were friends before, but he was just really like cordial and open to me that night, and I was like hmmm.

*Lost weight.* In addition to being complimented on their appearance, four of the 11 average weight participants also enjoyed being told others thought they had lost weight. Erin noted regarding the best conversation about her weight that "It was when I reached my perfect weight – to be like 62 kilos. It was a perfect time because I felt satisfied and more confident." And Kristine said, "I guess, like, this – well, it's happened several times, 'cause my weight

fluctuates a lot. I'd say this past summer, my mom said that I lost weight and I was, like, oh, thanks. It just kind of caught me off guard. But..."

***Overweight and obese participants' best conversation about weight.*** For the overweight and obese participants, all but two ( $N = 8$ ) "best conversations" involved them being told they had lost weight. Emily said:

Well, there was a time when I got down to 200 and after I reached 16 I was pretty much 180 and up. And I – the biggest I ever got was 250 and I herniated a disc and I couldn't walk and like, it was just terrible. So I've been slowly losing weight. And I got down to 200 and then I bounced back up to 230, but when I was at 200 everybody was noticing and then saying, "Oh, you look so thin. Whatever you're doing, keep doing it." Like, "thanks."

In addition, Hema said:

I think when I have a check up after – I have my yearly check up and then I have one before I went away just to make sure I had all my tests and stuff, had all my shots and stuff, and that doctor weighed me and I'd lost like ten pounds over the summer so that was probably one of those times.

Amanda also added:

Just last night, I saw one of my friends from last year and she was like, "You're looking skinny, have you been working out?" I was like, "I try to between work and all these classes I'm taking." Last year, I think about the time I went home for Christmas break and I had been dieting and working out and people were like, "You look really good." Two other girls from my high school came into where I was working during Christmas and they're like, "What are you doing?" and I told them what I was doing and one girl has

been texting me and asking questions like, "Did you eat this when you were on your diet?" I like the people who noticed when it changed, because I was fairly larger in high school.

**Worst conversation about weight.** Finally, participants were asked to recall the worst conversation they had ever had about their weight.

*Underweight participants' worst conversation about weight.* There were no overarching themes found for the underweight group. The answers varied – one talked about gaining weight, one talked about depression, one talked about being told her friend thought she had an eating disorder, and another talked about her weight staying the same.

*Average weight participants' worst conversation about weight.* For the average weight group, responses fell into categories of being told they too thin or being told they were overweight.

*Being too thin.* Three out of the 11 responses to this question reflected the theme of being told they were too thin. In all of those cases, participants had been told by peers. In response to the question, Gabrielle said, "Oh, I'd say probably when I first started working. I was 16 and someone thought I was anorexic. Yeah." Similarly, Amber said, "Probably with my – one of my really good friends. She just – it was a long time ago. She just said I was disgustingly skinny. But I was a lot skinnier then."

*Being too fat.* In addition to being told they were too thin, four average weight participants also heard comments about being overweight. As with the comments about being too thin, three participants heard this type of messages. Erin said, "[someone said] "Your face is very fat." When my weight increases, it goes right to my face. They look at me when I feel that I am fat." In addition, Kristine said, "I really can't think of anything. The only thing is last

night when that girl at work told me I was getting fat because I just ate some cheese.” Similarly, Ashley said:

It had to be – I was dating a military guy and, of course, he can do one armed push-ups for hours, and I can’t even run. He told me, “You would be just better off if you lost weight.” He just flatly said, “You should lose 20 pounds.” If I lost 20 pounds, I would be like in double digits. I can’t lose 20 pounds.

***Overweight and obese participants’ worst conversation about weight.*** Two themes emerged with the overweight and obese participants’ responses to the worst conversation they recalled about their weight – family members commenting and fitting into clothes.

*Family members commenting about weight.* For three overweight and obese participants, their worst conversation about their weight came from parents. Sara said:

In February my parents let me go on – I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of Medifast (a liquid diet). I did that, and I did really good. I lost 15 pounds, but then over the summer I gained it all back, and my mom told me that I wasted their money. It was really hard.

In addition, Amie stated:

I think the worst was actually a little bit before I went to leave for college, because my parents were trying to be like, “You know, you can’t go to college. There’s the freshman 15, and we don’t think that you can afford to have the freshman 15.” My parents like us to look very nice, and I’m pretty sure I’d be this way regardless of my weight, but I’m like the jeans and t-shirt kind of girl, or sweatpants. My dad was like, “You know, if you’re not going to try and lose weight, you need to shop for clothes for your body type.” It felt like too much, like they were trying to control me, and half the time I was like ready to be out. That probably contributed to how irritated I was.

*Fitting into clothes.* In addition to hearing comments about their weight from family members, three overweight and obese participants also noted that their worst conversations about weight were in reference to fitting into clothes. Emily said:

Then was when I was getting – that was when I was at 250 and I was trying wedding dresses on and none of them looked good on me and I thought I was just too fat for all of them. And then I ended up getting a dress that I didn't really like because it covered me. And my mom and I were talking about it and I started crying, and I said, "I don't want to be in this stupid dress." That was probably the worst conversation about it. I was crying in the actual dress store. Which I'm sure they're used to, but...

Moreover, another female, Amanda, commented that her worst conversation about her weight occurred on a shopping excursion, while she was trying on boots:

[The conversation was about] Definitely my calves. Boots – they don't like to fit in them. It's something that my roommate – hers are the same thing. It's just finding – I don't remember what store we were in, but we were just trying on so many pairs of boots and none of them looked right and none of them looked like they look on other girls and it was just depressing that I couldn't find a pair of boots that would fit around my calves. I actually work out when I can and I was like – my roommate's sister is just tiny – and we were like, "It would be nice to have a high metabolism like Jessie does," because she eats like a baby dinosaur and she's just tiny. My little brother likes to tease me about my cankles and it's just my calves in general are just – and it's not like there's a lot of fat, there's a lot of – It's hard. It's just the way I was built.

For a complete list of themes for research question two, see Appendix D, Table 2.

### **Research Question Three: Situations of Weight Identity Salience**

To answer research question three, which addresses the saliency of weight identity, a question from the interview was used. This question asked participants about situations in which they are self-conscious about their weight (see Appendix B, question 12).

***Underweight participants' salience of weight identity.*** For three of the underweight participants, they noted that they were self-conscious when people made comments about their weight. Kara said:

I have been in the past, just whenever people do make comments, or if I read a magazine. I love *Seventeen* magazine, or *Cosmo*, but I don't know. Just seeing those pictures, and reading certain articles, you just wonder. Even if you're perfectly average weight, you just can't help but wonder.

In addition, Mandi said:

Not self-conscious negatively. I mean, I'm aware – I'm very aware, like, 'cause people tell me, you know? Recently. I was in a bathroom at my house, and I live with other girls in a dorm, and one of them is – like, we were getting ready for bed and she's, like, "Oh, you're so skinny," and, like, and this was at a point where, like, I had just gotten weighed and, like, I was 116, and I'm, like, that's not good. So I was just kind of, like, you know – I was, like, "Yeah, I am," and I looked at myself more, just, like, lifted up my shirt. Just, like, yeah, I was very aware.

***Average weight participants' salience of weight identity.*** For average weight participants, they noted they feel self-conscious when they were getting dressed. Eight of the 11 average weight participants talked about the saliency of their weight when they were around clothes. For instance, Gini said:



Usually when I'm getting dressed, or depending on what I'm wearing that day. If it's something a little bit tighter, I feel like people notice more my weight. It's mostly in the morning when I'm getting dressed though, when I feel like, "Man, I can't fit in to my clothes. My jeans are too tight."

Similarly, Gini noted:

It was probably – it was just the other week. I put one of my bigger pairs of jeans on and they still were like kind of tight. And a shirt that I'd gotten that always looked good on me but I just looked in the mirror and it just didn't look the same. And then I went out with my friends that night and I was looking at the pictures from that night and I just really – you could just tell I did not fit in those clothes anymore and I was just kind of – it was kind of upsetting I guess.

Likewise, Julie stated:

Any time I go out. Like, any time I feel the need to like, dress up because I'm gonna be doing something, I get really self-conscious, especially about my legs, so.

And Ashley said:

Pretty much when I go out with my friends and I see all the girls in the little tight black dresses and stuff. Even when they do have a little bit of stomach, they're able to work it some. I just never feel that I'm in that much of shape that I can wear something like that and guys would still want to hang out with me and stuff like that.

***Overweight and obese participants' salience of weight identity.*** Like the average weight group, the theme of clothes was also evident in the overweight and obese responses. However, the overweight and obese responses also included the theme of being around smaller females.

*Clothes.* As with the average weight participants, the overweight and obese females also had the common theme of being self-conscious with their weight in relation to clothes. Six of the 10 overweight and obese females noted that they were aware of their weight when putting on clothes or dressing up for an event. Amanda said:

When I put on my jeans – this little muffin top right here, it really bothers me. And when I wear shorts, I feel like my cellulite is just huge – like there's dents in there and I know that there is not. I tan because I was telling my roommate, "Tan fat looks better than pale fat." So I will not wear shorts if I'm not tan, because I think it kind of hides the cellulite. Halloween costume shopping is just the worst because those things run so small and I'm like, "Really? I have to wear 1X?" It's the worst. Mostly, it is – the thing I am most self-conscious about is my butt, and I know it's so silly, but my friends call me white chocolate because it is just so big and finding jeans is horrible. It is my least favorite thing to shop for – and skirts because they're plenty long in the front and then in the back, you can see my ass. I'm not sure if I can say that. But it's really frustrating.

Similarly, Abby said:

When I dress up. I'm not used to the formal situations because I'm more relaxed or whatever. And so, when I have to dress up I'm not used to it. And then I start noticing all these different things like, oh, look at my weight. More of like, oh, it's starting to get a tummy or whatever. And it's really uncomfortable and I freak out. And then my fiancée has to calm me down and then I'm worried about my looks for the whole night.

In addition, Sara said, "Usually whenever I'm going out because I want to wear really cute dresses and they don't always look as cute as they do in smaller sizes." And Amie noted:

Just going out shopping, I'm conscious of it. When I go to work out at the Rec, I'm definitely conscious of it. Sometimes just going out, when you're going out to clubs, or going out to a party, and you're dressing up. There's clothing options that aren't necessarily – they are available to me, but they don't look good, and so it's just – it's a little different I feel when I go to my closet to get ready, than it is for some of my friends.

*Smaller females.* In addition to referencing clothes and weight identity salience, two overweight and obese participants noted that they felt self-conscious about their weight when around smaller females. For instance, Sherrie said:

Probably when maybe I'm with my friends – like the ones that are smaller – and we're around a bunch of guys and then I'm like, "They're all looking at her." Not necessarily that I notice that they pay attention to her, but it's easy for me just to go to that because she's small.

In addition, Emily stated in relation to when she is self-conscious about her weight, "Probably when I'm around a lot of other tinier females. I feel that they meet a society standard and I don't."

For a complete list of themes for research question three, see Appendix D, Table 3.

#### **Research Question Four: Relationship Between Physical Weight and Weight Identity**

The fourth research question (how does one's physical weight influence weight identity?) was answered using questions from both the survey and the interview. One of the survey questions examined was the sliding scale items that indicated to what percentage intelligence, sex, political beliefs, weight, personality, religious beliefs, and occupation made up the participants' identities. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the percentage participants' reported identifying with weight differed significantly based on subject BMI,  $F(2, 395) = 5.25, p$

$\leq .006$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.03$ . Post hoc tests using Fischer's LSD indicated that self-reported identification with weight was significantly higher in overweight/obese and average weight participants than underweight participants (see Appendix D, Table 5). No significant results were found for intelligence, sex, political beliefs, personality, religious beliefs, or occupation.

Similarly, the Likert-scale items that followed that asked how closely participants identified with others who have similar body shapes, sex, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and personality traits as themselves, were also examined. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that there were no significant differences based on BMI and the closeness with which participants identified with others based on body shape, sex, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and personality.

***Drawings and identity.*** Finally, the fourth research question was examined in terms of the drawings participants made. Participants were asked to draw representations of underweight, average weight, overweight and obese people. They were then asked to circle the drawing with which they most identified.

*Underweight drawings and identification.* Three of the underweight participants indicated that they identified with the normal body type, as opposed to the underweight body type (see Appendix D, Figures 17-20).

*Average weight drawings and identification.* Nine of the average weight viewed themselves as normal, while two average weight subjects saw themselves as overweight (see Appendix D, Figures 21-31).

*Overweight and obese drawings.* Like the average weight participants, the overweight and obese participants also had an accurate assessment of their bodies with all but two participants marking that they were overweight or obese (see Appendix D, Figures 32-41).

For a complete list of themes for research question four, see Appendix D, Table 4.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

By studying underweight women, average weight women, and overweight and obese women, this study sought to define the concept of weight identity, to examine recalled messages respondents reported, to identify situations in which it is salient, and to understand how one's physical weight affects one's weight identity. Participants were solicited using an Internet survey given to females enrolled in the basic communication course. Based on that survey, participants were screened and were asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Responses to both the survey and interview questions were used to answer the research questions associated with the study.

#### **Research Question One: Weight Identity**

Research question one asked if a weight identity exists. Overall, survey results indicated that participants considered their personality to make up the majority of their identity and indicated that they identified most with people who had a similar personality as opposed to other characteristics. Thus, the overall survey results indicated that when asked directly, participants do not view their weight as the most important part of their identities.

However, the interviews suggested a different and more nuanced finding, namely that weight identity does exist among participants. To demonstrate this conclusion, the psychological and interpersonal aspects of social identity need to be met with the concept of weight. Within the social identity perspective, identity is composed of three different components – cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Deaux, 1996). When all three elements are present, a social identity is formed (Deaux, 1996). Thus, to answer the research question, participants' responses were considered in terms of their cognitive, affective, and behavioral components.

**Cognitive components of weight.** For weight identity to reflect cognitive components, participants needed to have referred to thinking about their weight. The cognitive component of social identity was present in the participants' responses. Participants indicated the cognitive processes associated with weight when they answered the question, "Are there times when you are self-conscious about your weight?" While there were some participants who noted that there were not times when they were self-conscious about their weight, most of the participants indicated that there were times when weight was at the forefront of their minds. Members of the underweight group were self-conscious about their weight when someone tried to talk about it with them; average weight participants were self-conscious about their weight when getting dressed; and overweight and obese participants were self-conscious about their weight when they were doing activities related to clothes or when they were around smaller women.

For individuals to be self-conscious of their weight, they must think about their weight. Thinking about weight was especially evident for the average weight and overweight and obese participants, who noted that they think about their weight often, associating their weight with the daily task of dressing. For example, Gini, an average weight female, stated "Usually [I feel self-conscious about my weight] when I'm getting dressed, or depending on what I'm wearing that day. If it's something a little bit tighter, I feel like people notice more my weight. It's mostly in the morning when I'm getting dressed though..." Similarly, Amanda, an overweight female said, "When I put on my jeans – this little muffin top right here, it really bothers me. And when I wear shorts, I feel like my cellulite is just huge – like there's dents in there and I know that there is not."

In addition, the cognitive processes associated with weight were present in answers to the question, "How important is weight to who you are?" Several ( $N = 12$ ) noted that weight was

important to who they are and indicated in their responses that they “identified” with their body shape. Mandi, an underweight female, said, “I identify, like, as a skinny person,” and Amanda, an overweight female stated, “I’d almost say that the curves kind of make me.” These responses suggest that participants have thought about their weight in terms of how it portrays who they are.

The cognitive component of weight also is reflected when individuals categorize themselves according to some group or group characteristic (Deaux, 1996). When asked about when they were self-conscious about their weight, participants’ responses indicated that certain situations, such as when others talked about weight (e.g., underweight participants), when getting dressed (e.g., average weight and overweight and obese participants), and being around smaller females (e.g., overweight and obese participants), made them think about themselves in certain ways. Deaux (1996) notes that categorization occurs when individuals say, “I am an X.” Thus, the participants categorized themselves into certain groups (e.g., “I am a thin person” or “I am a fat person”), when they were in particular contexts.

Moreover, the cognitive aspect of weight was also evident when participants were asked to physically describe themselves and their friends. All three BMI groups noted some type of dissatisfaction or felt the need to provide justification for their body type. Even the underweight participants felt the need to explain their shape. For example, Kara, an underweight female said, “But I wouldn’t say too thin or too heavy or anything like that.” This indicates that although by society’s standards, the underweight participants are considered to be ideal because they are very thin, they still have insecurities about their body shape and felt the need to justify their thinness.

Like the underweight participants, the average weight and overweight and obese participants also talked about insecurities with their bodies. Average weight participants noted



that there was “room for improvement” and that they were not happy with particular areas. Julie noted, “I guess I’m reasonably good to look at. But I have a lot of insecurities about the weight of my thighs in specific and the little pooch everyone has.” Similarly, Gini stated, “...I would say there’s definitely a lot of things I don’t like about my weight. I just feel like I’m chubby. I don’t have a flat stomach. I’m constantly looking at my midsection area...” This indicates a quest for perfection that women tend to seek in terms of their bodies. These women cannot see that they are healthy in terms of their BMI. Rather, they choose to see their imperfections. Instead of celebrating their average weight bodies, they dislike their bodies by focusing on one part that is not “perfect,” such as their stomachs or thighs.

Similarly, the overweight and obese participants also talked about being dissatisfied with their bodies. For example, Sara stated, “I don’t think I’m obese, but I do think I have some weight to lose,” and Hema said, ““I think there’s aspects of my body that are pretty, but like there’s obviously places that need improvement.” Because society is currently obsessed with weight (Stearns, 1997), the overweight and obese participants know where they fit on the scale of body types, for they are surrounded by messages that tell them they are overweight and/or need to improve themselves in some way (Bissell & Peiquin, 2006; Harris, 2004).

The concepts of weight and body shape were mentioned in the majority of the responses. Despite the fact that the survey portion indicated that weight was not a major part of the participants’ identities, when asked to describe themselves, most mentioned their weight or body shape. Although they were asked to describe themselves physically, which sets them up to talk about themselves in terms of their appearance, most did not mention other types of physical characteristics, such as hair color or eye color, and they only mentioned their height if it was above or below the average (e.g., Kara said, “[I’m] definitely tall. I stand out, that’s for sure.”

And Phyllis said, “I’m kind of short. I would probably definitely still say that I’m short, because I am. I’m pretty short.”). This indicates that their perception of themselves is tied closely to their weight and body shape.

In addition, the cognitive components associated with weight were also evident regarding the frequency of talking about weight. In terms of the frequency, participants’ responses ranged from rarely to frequently regarding this issue. However, while some participants noted that weight was not frequently a subject of conversation (e.g., “My weight? Not very often. Every once in a while, but I feel like that’s pretty normal.” – Jennifer, underweight female), most participants noted that they talked about weight regularly, saying that weight was often on their mind (e.g., “I’d say a lot. I think it’s more than I probably should. It’s usually always on my mind, I guess you could say.” – Gini, average weight female; and “It is something that I have been a little preoccupied with and something I think about a lot.” – Amanda, overweight female).

Similarly, the cognitive components of identity were present when participants were asked to describe their friends’ body shapes. Overall, each category of participants had friends of various body shapes. This means that although weight is most likely not a factor in the reasoning behind friendship choices (as the survey results also suggested), these participants do view their friends in terms of how they physically compare to themselves when asked. For example, one average weight female, Gabrielle, stated, “It’s different, you know. Some are more curvy, and some are skinny, some are tall, short,” while Abby, an overweight female, said, “Body shape? I have a wide variety of friends with body shape. So, but – all shapes and sizes: Tall, skinny, pear, overweights, what – I mean that’s a loose term, but yeah.” While weight may not be a distinguishing factor for friendship, it might be considered.

Results also revealed that those who are underweight have some friends who are larger than they are. This is not surprising, considering that they are underweight and given that most Americans are currently overweight or obese (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Some average weight participants noted that they have some friends who are bigger than they are. Based on the average weight participants' descriptions of their "bigger" friends, a pattern was. While those who described their friends as having various body shapes used general terms to describe their friends (e.g., "average" or "normal"), those who indicated they had friends who were larger or smaller talked about their friends' body shapes in relation to themselves. For example, Sherrie, an overweight participant, said, "Probably most of my closest friends are a little smaller than me."

If participants described their friends as being overweight or obese, their friends were referred to as "overweight" or "big," which are general statements about appearance. Phyllis, an average weight participant said, "I mean, I have a few friends that are bigger and I have friends that are smaller, so..." Similarly, another average weight participant, Kristine stated, "I do have one friend that's really, really big." However, participants described their thinner friends healthy or physically in shape. Amie, an overweight female noted, "... for the most part most of my friends are pretty thin. A lot of them were pretty athletic in high school, and my best friend did cross country."

This pattern of describing overweight and obese in general terms and describing average weight individuals in specific terms was also evident in the physical descriptions of themselves. This pattern could potentially indicate that for this sample, there were two categories to which individuals fell into in terms of their weight. Individuals are either considered to be thin and/or

healthy, or individuals are considered to be overweight. One can be at various levels of being thin, such as having a larger stomach or having larger legs, but overall, this person falls into the “thin category.” Yet, if a person is overweight or obese, there are no varying degrees to this condition, such as having a larger stomach or larger hips. One is either overweight or not. For example, when average weight participants described themselves, they would demarcate that they were *not* overweight but were not perfect. Gini’s statement about herself exemplifies this, for she said:

I wouldn’t say overweight, but I would say there’s definitely a lot of things I don’t like about my weight. I just feel like I’m chubby. I don’t have a flat stomach. I’m constantly looking at my midsection area, but I wouldn’t say I’m overweight, but I would say I’m not at the weight I want to be.

She points out several times in her description of herself that she is *not* overweight but has specific areas she would like to improve. Similarly, Julie noted that “I have a lot of insecurities about the weight of my thighs in specific and the little pooch everyone has.” Again, she talks about specific areas that “need work,” but she is careful not to label herself as actually overweight.

On the other hand, if a participant was overweight or obese, she categorized herself into that particular group, using words associated with being overweight. For example, Sara said, “I don’t think I’m obese, but I do think I have some weight to lose.” Even within the overweight category, participants were demarcating where they stood, saying “I’m overweight, but not obese.” Similarly, Amanda stated, “I wouldn’t say fat necessarily, but chubby. A little bigger than I’d like to be.” These comments suggest that there are categories that people place themselves and others into regarding their weight.

This phenomenon relates to social identity theory's notion of identifying with low-status groups (Brown, 2000). Being overweight or obese is currently one of the most stigmatized conditions in the United States (Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004) and thus is considered to be a low-status group. Research (e.g., Brown, 2000; Ellemers, 1993; Turner & Brown, 1978) has shown that when people identify with low-status groups, they enact several "identity protecting" tactics, including disidentifying (i.e., leaving the group), becoming socially creative (i.e., redefining or reconstructing comparisons to other groups), and contesting the dominant group's superior status. When describing themselves, the overweight and obese participants enact in this study the "identity protecting" concept of being socially creative. Because they are in a low-status group by being overweight, they describe themselves in ways that demonstrate some superiority over other groups. For example, the overweight and obese participants note that they "not fat but chubby" or "not obese but not healthy," indicating that they are trying to separate themselves from a lower-status group, the obese.

Overall, many of the responses to the interview questions indicate that there are cognitive processes associated with weight. Participants categorized themselves and others according to their weight, for one was either within an "acceptable range" of being normal or one was overweight.

**Affective components of weight.** While for some scholars, cognitive affiliation with a group is enough to count as a social identity, to fully understand the identification process, affect and/or emotion must also be taken into consideration (Deaux, 1996). Tajfel (1978) noted that social categories had affective meaning, meaning that categorizing oneself and others into certain groups evokes feelings.

Embedded within participants' responses to questions were indications of how they felt about their weight. For example, when asked to recall a comment someone made about her weight, Julie, an average weight female, said being called overweight made her feel, "I didn't feel good about myself at all. And that's kind of like stuck with me. I don't like that it's stuck with me." Similarly, when another average weight participant, Erin, was told she was overweight by her father, she felt, "Unsatisfied with myself. Since then, I'm always afraid of my weight."

Moreover, Amie, an overweight female, noted that when her parents would talk about her weight, she would become "pretty defensive." In addition, Emily, an overweight participant, stated that when a boy in high school called her a "fat ass," it made her feel, "Insignificant. It just didn't feel – it's like no matter how smart I am or anything else, it doesn't matter."

Overall, within the responses to various questions, participants noted that they had feelings toward their weight and their weight categories, particularly when someone pointed out that they were not at the ideal weight. Most negative feelings came from normal and overweight and obese participants. Only one participant, Mandi, an underweight female, noted that she felt positive about her weight, saying that her weight, "make[s] me feel, like, special sometimes..." Despite the valence of these feelings, these statements show that the participants have an affective association with their weight, and this is particularly the case when their weight is brought up as a topic in conversation.

**Behavioral components of weight.** The final component of social identity is behavioral. In its classic, sociological sense, the behavioral factor of social identity requires interdependence among members of a social category, meaning that members of a category take a joint action or participate in coordinated activities (Deaux, 1996). However, Brown (1988) noted that

individuals can experience two types of interdependence – fate interdependence and task interdependence. Fate interdependence is when individuals feel they have the same destiny as others, and often occurs in groups that are labeled by society (e.g., ethnic groups, age groups). Task interdependence occurs when people are directly involved with each other pursuing a common goal. Fate interdependence does not require direct interaction with members of a particular group to occur, and social identity can be formed solely on fate interdependence (Deaux, 1996).

Fate interdependence was evident among the responses and could be seen in answers to questions regarding talking about one's weight and with whom participants were *not* comfortable discussing their weight. Overall, participants preferred to talk about weight with people they consider close, such as family members, significant others, and friends. For these participants, weight appears to be a personal issue that they do not discuss openly. In talking to these particular people, participants seek those who can either commiserate with them (i.e., friends) or those who will support them the way they are (i.e., significant others and family members). For example, Phyllis, an average weight female stated that she and her roommate, "talk about [weight] all day – or a lot – because we're, you know, getting ready for spring break," which indicates that they are talking about their struggles together in preparation for a time when they will be revealing their bodies in swimsuits. In addition, another average weight participant, Ashley, said she talks to her boyfriend about her weight because "...he's very supportive, [saying,] 'You look great.'"

In addition, particularly with the overweight and obese group, participants tended to talk about their weight with those who were similar in size. For example, one overweight participant, Amanda, talked about discussing weight her mom and her brother, saying, "I talk about it with

my mom and my mom is pretty much the same shape as I do – we have the exact same thighs. Then, my little brother, he just shot up, so he’s still – he’s husky and he’s not even pudgy anymore.” Similarly, another overweight participant, Emily said, “I would say, [I talk about weight] often with my husband. He’s also overweight.” This behavior supports the findings regarding the participants’ physical descriptions of themselves and their friends. As earlier findings suggested, participants indicated that there were categorizations occurring regarding weight. Those who were “normal” could have various body types or “problem areas” but were still considered “normal.” Those who were overweight or obese were only seen as overweight or obese with no “acceptable” range to the condition. In only feeling comfortable talking to people who are also overweight, participants supported the categorical nature of weight, for they not only *see* people differently in terms of their weight, they also *act* according to how they categorize others (e.g., not talking about weight with smaller individuals).

Perceiving and taking action regarding these categories indicates that there are ingroups and outgroups associated with weight. This ingroup and outgroup formation regarding weight was also supported when participants noted with whom they were *not* comfortable talking about their weight. Overweight and obese participants noted that they primarily were only comfortable talking about their weight with people of similar size. For example, Sara noted she was not comfortable talking about weight with “Probably my best friend just because she doesn’t really understand, because she’s one of those people that can usually eat whatever she wants and still be tiny.” Similarly, Emily said she was not comfortable talking about weight with her “friends, especially since they’re all skinny. They just don’t get it because they don’t have any problems with their weight. They’re just naturally thin, most of them.”



While it was primarily the overweight and obese group that talked about weight in terms of ingroup and outgroups, the presence of this behavior indicates the existence of weight identity in the other participants. Because overweight and obese people are stigmatized due to their condition (Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004), the overweight and obese often hear comments that they are not “the norm.” Thus, weight identity is a more salient issue for them, causing the behavioral fate interdependence to be more evident in them than in underweight and average weight participants.

The existence of fate interdependence among the overweight and obese group indicates that this type of interdependence is present in all weight groups, for the overweight and obese groups are dependent upon the underweight and average weight groups to indicate to them that they are not “the norm.” In a similar vein, the underweight and average weight groups are dependent upon the overweight and obese group to confirm to them that they are “the norm.” None of these weight groups can have their identities of being “normal” or being “overweight” unless they are comparing themselves to other groups. This notion could be seen when participants were asked to describe themselves. Underweight participants talked about themselves as being “thin” (e.g., Kara and Susan) or “skinny” (e.g., Jennifer and Mandi). Yet, in describing themselves as “thin” or as “skinny,” they were comparing themselves to a figure in their mind that was “average” or “normal,” for they know that they are smaller than that picture.

The same process also occurred with the average weight participants, who described themselves as “normal” or “average” (e.g., Erin, Gabrielle, and Kristine). Like the underweight participants, their responses indicated that they were comparing themselves to a standard, for what does “average” or “normal” mean when talking about weight? The actual average of weight for the United States is currently in the overweight range (Harris, 2004; United States

Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Yet, in their minds, they are comparing themselves a different body type. These comparisons were especially seen among average weight participants who disliked parts of their bodies. For example, Julie and Gini, both average weight females, noted that they were “average” with the exception of their stomach or thighs. This indicates that these women are comparing themselves to an “ideal” image regarding weight and appearance.

The concept of fate interdependence was also evident within participants’ responses, for participants in all three weight groups recalled messages of being told they were either “too skinny” or “too fat.” These comments indicate that there is an “accepted” body shape (i.e., an ingroup) to which people are being compared and categorized and are categorizing themselves based on how closely they fit that ingroup. Thus, the notion of fate interdependence is fulfilled with the concept of weight because participants were relegated to thinking that if they were not a certain weight or a certain body type, they were considered to be fat (i.e., an outgroup member).

In addition, the behavioral component of weight can be seen in the stigmatization, such as name calling, of the overweight and obese. Stigmatization against the overweight and obese is socially acceptable and continues to rise (Andreyeva, Puhl, & Brownell, 2008; Latner et al., 2008; Puhl & Heuer, 2009), despite the growing overweight and obese population. People are stigmatized because they break group norms (Abrams, Marques, Bown & Henson, 2000; Marques, Abrams & Serodio, 2001), for members do not want to associate with those who could potentially reflect poorly on the group (Lewis & Sherman, 2003; Marquez & Paez, 1994). The stigmatization of the overweight and obese indicates a level of task interdependence with the concept of weight, for people have a common goal to separate themselves from the overweight and obese as well as place them in an outgroup. This can be seen in research regarding general

population stigmatization of the overweight and obese (e.g., Andreyeva et al., 2008; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Puhl & Heuer, 2009) as well as medical practitioner stigmatization of the overweight and obese (e.g., Jay et al., 2009; Schwartz et al., 2002; Teachman & Brownell, 2001).

To function as a social identity, constructs must have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components associated with them. Based on participants' responses to the interview questions, weight has the properties of a social identity.

### **Research Question Two: Weight Identity and Communication**

To address the second research question, which asked about the role of communication in weight identity, participants were asked to report comments they had heard about their weight in the past, their best conversation about weight, and their worst conversation about weight.

Although participants were asked to recall any comments about their weight, they all mentioned comments that they perceived as negative. For example, underweight participants reported that they primarily heard comments about being too thin, and participants interpreted these comments negatively. For example, Kara said, "People ask me why I'm so thin, and make assumptions, but it's really because I ran cross country in high school." Underweight participants noted that people would make assumptions about their weight, telling them they thought they had an eating disorder, which offended them. One participant, Susan, talked about the double standard with weight, saying, "I always – I always looked at it, as like, you wouldn't go to someone and be like, "You really need to like, watch your daughter's weight. She's looking kind of fat today." So like, I don't know. I thought it was rude mostly, I guess, that someone would think that they knew what was going on in someone else's life kind of." Susan's comment points out that people seem to think that talking to people about being too thin is showing concern, while talking to people about being too fat is rude.

Similarly, most of the average weight participants recalled being told they were overweight by peers and parents. Participants noted that these comments hurt them emotionally and made them feel unsatisfied with their bodies. In addition, these comments drove some participants to action regarding their weight. One participant noted that after her father commented on her weight, she became anorexic, and another participant said that she was so concerned with her weight during pregnancy that she was not focusing on delivery or the health of the child. These comments are powerful and affect the participants mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally. This finding supports previous research on families and eating disorders, for there is a strong correlation between parental pressure and the development of eating disorders (Joiner, et al., 1997; Levine, 1996). In addition, overweight and obese participants also noted that they heard negative messages about their weight. They were called names, such as “fatty” or “fat ass,” due to their size. Although the term “fat” is what social movements and advocates use (e.g., National Association for Fat Acceptance), these participants considered it to be an insult.

The comments participants heard about weight suggest the powerful nature associated with conversations about weight. First, these statements show that participants remember what people have said about their weight. Second, they illustrate that participants are more likely to remember the negative comments as opposed to the positive comments, for the majority of what participants recalled were negative. And third, these comments indicate the lasting effects of these comments. Participants noted that they often took action after these comments or talked about how these comments still affect them.

When participants were asked to recall the best conversation they had about their weight, the responses varied. However, the overall underlying theme stems from the issue that these women are not satisfied with their bodies, and these positive comments made them feel good

about themselves. Underweight participants said they just wanted to be accepted for who they are; average weight participants said they wanted to be told they looked good or had lost weight; and overweight and obese participants said that they wanted to be told they had lost weight. These comments indicate that these women want to be told they are close to the ideal standard (i.e., the ingroup). And, regardless of their current weight status, when someone tells them they are fine the way they are or are getting close to that ideal image, they enjoy those comments.

Social identity research has shown that individuals can identify with low-status groups (Brown, 2000). When people identify with low-status groups, they may enact several “identity protecting” tactics, including disidentifying (i.e., leaving the group), becoming socially creative (i.e., redefining or reconstructing comparisons to other groups), and contesting the dominant group’s superior status (Brown, 2000; Ellemers, 1993; Turner & Brown, 1978). When individuals receive comments that they are “looking good” or that they have lost weight, they are able to become socially creative, for they can then reconstruct the appearance of the “ingroup” to include people of their size.

Similarly, when the participants were asked about their worst conversation about weight, one common theme seemed to emerge. This theme is the desire to be seen as perfect the way they are. Participants reported from both the normal and overweight and obese groups that the worst conversations about their weight occurred when others told them they were not the ideal size. For example, Ashley, an average weight participant, noted, “I was dating a military guy and, of course, he can do one armed push-ups for hours, and I can’t even run. He told me, ‘You would be just better off if you lost weight.’ He just flatly said, ‘You should lose 20 pounds.’” Similarly, Amie, an overweight participant said, “I think the worst [conversation about weight] was actually a little bit before I went to leave for college, because my parents were trying to be

like, ‘You know, you can’t go to college. There’s the freshman 15, and we don’t think that you can afford to have the freshman 15.’”

Having heard these types of messages explains why when describing themselves, some of the average weight and most of the overweight and obese individuals pointed out their faults rather than their attributes. The comments that these groups talked about were often reflected in their answers regarding their physical descriptions of themselves. For example, overweight and obese participant indicated that they had been told they were overweight, unhealthy, or they needed to lose weight, and when asked how they would physically describe themselves, they would say, “I am unhealthy,” “I’m a little chubby,” or “I need to lose weight.”

In the same respect, several average weight participants noted that they could not recall past comments about their weight. For example, when asked if anyone had commented about her weight in the past, Jessica, Phyllis, and Gala said, “Not really.” This could be an indicator for why these particular women are able to see themselves accurately in terms of their weight. For example, in the drawings, the average weight participants who heard negative messages about their weight indicated that they felt that parts of their body were overweight, yet those who had heard positive messages about weight or who could not recall past comments about their weight indicated they saw themselves as “normal.”

This finding relates to the behavioral component of interdependence associated with social identity. Participants gain their identities by interacting with others and having others tell them to which group they belong (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Yet, others’ group categorizations are dependent upon how one’s appearance relates to an ideal ingroup. Thus, participants are told, “you are too fat” or “you are too thin,” indicating that they are being compared to a standard and do not fit.

These findings also support previous research on family interaction and eating disorders. For the average and overweight and obese groups, participants noted that the negative comments they heard about their weight often came from family members. Family members would often place stress on participants to be a certain size. For example, Amie, an overweight participant, her noted that her worst conversation about weight came from her parents before she went to college, for her father told her, “You know, you can’t go to college. There’s the freshman 15, and we don’t think that you can afford to have the freshman 15.” Similarly, an average weight participant, Ashley, said her dad would comment about her weight, saying, “You could work out a little more. You could do a little more, Ashley.” These comments would make the participants feel bad about themselves and feel the need to change their habits. Family research (e.g., Botta & Dumalo, 2002) has shown disordered has been associated with poor interaction with parents, namely between women and their fathers. Although only one participant noted that these comments drove her to become anorexic, participants who heard negative comments about their weight from family members pointed out that these comments affected how they thought about themselves.

As seen from the various forms of communication participants received about their weight, it is clear that talk could be a component that influences weight identity. The conversations the participants had about weight were necessary in establishing their weight identities, for it was through those conversations about weight that they learned how they either fit or did not fit the ingroup’s body type. Participants primarily recalled negative comments they had heard about their weight. These comments were then reflected in answers to other questions, such as how they would describe themselves and how important weight was to who they were.

Those who had heard negative messages indicated that weight was more important to them than those who did not hear those messages.

### **Research Question Three: Situations of Weight Identity Salience**

The third research question asked in what types of situations weight identity was salient. It was answered through responses to the interview question “In what situations are you self-conscious about your weight?” during the interview. Almost all of the participants noted that there were situations in which they were aware of their weight. One primary situation involved trying on or putting on clothes (e.g., normal and overweight and obese participants). Most of the average weight participants talked about the saliency of their weight when they were around clothes. For example, Julie stated she was self-conscious of her weight, “Any time I go out. Like, any time I feel the need to like, dress up because I’m gonna be doing something, I get really self-conscious, especially about my legs, so.” Similarly, Ashley stated she was self-conscious about her weight, “Pretty much when I go out with my friends and I see all the girls in the little tight black dresses and stuff. Even when they do have a little bit of stomach, they’re able to work it some.”

As with the average weight participants, the overweight and obese females also had the common theme of being self-conscious with their weight in relation to clothes. Most of the overweight and obese females noted that they were aware of their weight when putting on clothes or dressing up for an event. For example, Amanda, an overweight participant, stated she was self-conscious “When I put on my jeans – this little muffin top right here, it really bothers me. And when I wear shorts, I feel like my cellulite is just huge – like there’s dents in there and I know that there is not.” These statements indicate that weight is on their mind a lot, for they



get dressed every day. While they are getting dressed, their insecurities about their bodies and their weight are evident.

The issue of clothes was also linked with the interview question of the worst conversation about weight for the overweight and obese participants. Overweight and obese participants noted that their worst conversations about weight were in reference to fitting into clothes. Participants noted that having conversations around or about fitting into clothes reminded them about the fact that they were not the ideal size, for they have limited options in finding clothing. For example, Emily, an obese participant, noted that she cried while trying on wedding dresses because she could not find a dress she wanted in her size. While they are in other settings, their weight is not at the forefront of conversations, but when trying to actually be sized, weight is an issue that has to be addressed. In most circumstances, overweight and obese people have to talk about their weight when trying on clothes because they have to ask for special sizes or shop in designated sections that point to the fact that they are not the “normal” size.

Clothes are advertised to look a certain way on a particular (usually thin) body (Kilbourne, 1994), and everyone wears clothes differently. But participants noted that they were most aware of their flaws when they were putting on clothes and felt that they did not look good in them. This, again, indicates the existence of weight identity, for participants were comparing themselves to how “ideal” ingroup or outgroup members would appear in the clothes.

In addition, the saliency of the overweight and obese group’s weight identity was also referenced. While the average weight and underweight groups noted that they were self-conscious about their weight when others brought it up (underweight) or when trying on clothes (average weight), the overweight and obese group noted that they became aware of their weight and size when they were around smaller females. This finding relates to the earlier finding

regarding with whom they are comfortable talking about weight. Results revealed that the overweight and obese participants noted that they were most comfortable talking about their weight with people who were their size because they understood their situation. In the same respect, when they are around smaller females, they are aware of their bodies because they are around people who do not necessarily understand what it means to overweight.

Being self-conscious about one's weight when around smaller females also indicates a perceived outgroup status for the overweight and obese participants. Because weight is an observable phenomenon, the overweight and obese know that they do not have the ideal body type. In the same respect, they know that the average weight and underweight females do have the ideal body. Therefore, there is a psychological distance based on appearance that the overweight and obese face when interacting with those who are not their body type.

#### **Research Question Four: Relationship Between Physical Weight and Weight Identity**

The fourth research question asked how one's actual weight affected one's weight identity. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the percentage participants' identified with weight differed significantly based on subject BMI, with the significant differences coming from the overweight and obese group. For example, this shows that overweight and obese people associate weight with their identity more than do the average weight and underweight groups. While examining the overall means indicated that weight was not an important fact in one's identity, when the means were tested against each other in terms of BMI groups, the results demonstrated that the overweight and obese group identified with weight more than the normal and underweight participants.

The salience of weight identity in the overweight and obese participants was confirmed with the interview questions, for the overweight and obese participants noted that weight was

more important to them, they identified with others of their shape, and they were more self-conscious of their weight, than the normal and underweight body types. This finding also supports the notion that the overweight and obese have a weight identity that is more salient than the average weight and underweight groups.

This saliency of weight identity among the overweight and obese participants is due to the fact that this particular group is the marginalized group in terms of weight. Underweight and average weight participants' bodies conform more to the "ideal body" norm, or ingroup. The overweight and obese participants know they are far from that body shape, for they talked about being self-conscious about their weight around smaller females. Thus, being surrounded by images of the "perfect body" makes them think weight more than others.

This finding is similar to findings regarding race and social identity. With race, social identity has been shown to be a primary identity with ethnic minorities (Rush, 1998). Yet all people, no matter what race, have a social identity associated with their race (Rush, 1998; Williams, 1999). This racial identity is based on comparisons between groups, and racial minorities have a more salient racial social identity because they are aware that they are not what society deems "the norm."

A similar phenomenon occurs regarding weight. Because overweight and obese people are stigmatized due to their condition (Puhl, 2003; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004), they are shown through comments and actions that they are not "the norm." Thus, weight identity is a more salient issue for them, causing the behavioral interdependence to be more evident in them than in underweight and average weight participants.

As revealed by the results for research question one, weight has an effect on the prevalence of weight identity, for overweight and obese participants noted that weight was a

salient part of their identity, as opposed to underweight and average weight participants.

Regardless of weight, all participants' responses indicated that they are constantly comparing themselves to what is considered the "norm," or ingroup. Because overweight and obese people fall into the category the outgroup, their weight identity is more significant to them.

Moreover, the drawings were used to answer the fourth research question. Participants were asked to draw representations of underweight, average weight, overweight, and obese people. They were then asked to circle the drawing to which they most identified.

Most (3/4) of the underweight participants indicated that they identified with the normal body type, as opposed to the underweight body type. This indicates several things. First, it shows that underweight participants view their bodies in a somewhat positive way. The term "underweight" connotes someone who is sickly and starving, but they see themselves positively by indicating that they are "normal." Second, it demonstrates that they are unaware of their actual body type in terms of BMI. Third, it illustrates how society perpetuates this notion that being very thin is normal. There is no reason that they would not view themselves as normal if the images they see on television and in magazines tell them that their body type is the norm.

Average weight participants primarily viewed themselves as normal. This indicates that most of the average weight participants had an accurate view of their bodies. However, two of the average weight subjects saw themselves as overweight. These two participants also noted that previous comments about their weight have influenced their perception of themselves, for the comments they heard were that they needed to lose weight or were overweight.

Like the average weight participants, the overweight and obese participants also had an accurate assessment of their bodies with all but two participants marking that they were overweight or obese. Thus, the overweight and obese participants have an accurate view of their

body shapes because they have heard messages throughout their lives that they are above the ideal weight range. In addition, they are very aware of their bodies in general, for they are living in a “thin world.”

**Summary.** Interview results for this study revealed that weight is a social identity, and this weight identity is influenced by communication, is salient when participants are around clothes, and is most evident among the overweight and obese. However, although this study found that a weight identity exists, there were some limitations that provide opportunities for future research.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of this study is the sample size of the three BMI categories. The sample was primarily made up of average weight females ( $N = 11$ ) and overweight and obese females ( $N = 10$ ) and had very few underweight females ( $N = 4$ ). Future research should seek have equal numbers of all three categories to enable better comparisons across groups. This study was also limited by the type of sample. The sample was composed of college students, which represents an elite group. This could have influenced responses and prevents generalization to other groups.

Similarly, the study should also be expanded to look at differences in terms of culture. The overall sample was predominately White, and the interviews consisted of all Caucasians but one. Weight and appearance is something that is socially and culturally bound (Fallon, 1990; Maurer & Sobal, 1999), and this study should be repeated examining weight identity in relation to culture.

Another limitation is the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) as a measure for weight. Smith and Haslam (2007) found that measuring your waist is a more effective measure of health

risk associated with obesity. The BMI does not distinguish between fat and muscle (Mitka, 2005; Stevens, McClain, & Truesdale, 2008). Results could potentially vary if other measures of health in terms of weight (e.g., waist circumference) were used.

In addition, social desirability could have been an influencing factor in participants' interview responses and is thus a limitation of this study. Participants were asked to talk about a subject that is often sensitive for women and is often stigmatized. Therefore, their responses could have been influenced by a desire to appear a certain way to the interviewer. Similarly, the respondents could have also been influenced by the interviewer's size. Those whose size was similar to the interviewer could have been more comfortable sharing about their weight than those who did not match the interviewer's size.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to understand if the concept of weight was a social identity. Based on the responses from the interviews, weight was shown have properties of a social identity, for it has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. In addition, this study found that communication could be a potential influence on weight identity, for participants' responses to questions about themselves often reflected what they had been told by others about their weight. This study also found that the properties of weight identity are most salient in the overweight and obese participants.

The findings of this research have both theoretical and practical implications. First, this research expands upon social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Presently, research has shown that individuals have social identities associated with age (e.g., Garstka, Hummert & Branscombe, 2005; Gartska, Schmitt, Branscombe & Hummert, 2004; Hummert, Gartska, Ryan & Bonnesen, 2004), disabilities (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Hahn, 1988; Scambler

& Hopkins, 1986), sex (e.g., Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Skevington & Baker, 1989), and ethnicity (e.g., Rush, 1998; Williams, 1999). This research indicated that individuals could also have an identity associated with their weight.

This research also adds to the literature about weight and parental interaction. Current research (e.g., Lasegue, 1873; Segrin, 2001; Waller & Calam, 1994) has focused solely on eating disorders and parent-child communication. This study looked at weight in general and bolstered the claims about parental influence on eating behaviors. Participants noted that negative comments from parents about their weight were especially hurtful and often drove them to action. Although only one participant noted that negative interactions with her parents about her weight led her to develop an eating disorder, other participants noted that the comments affected their self-esteem and affected how they see themselves in terms of their weight.

Second, the current research study also has practical implications. The United States is currently experiencing an obesity epidemic (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.), and it has been projected that if the current trends in obesity continue, by 2030, 86.3% adults will be overweight or obese (Wang, Beydoun, Liang, Caballero, & Kumanyika, 2008). Government and medical professionals have consistently been telling individuals to, “eat less and exercise more.” Although the message is simple, statistics indicate the message is not being heeded. The current study indicates that weight is not just a behavioral problem, for individuals could have a weight identity that is formed and influenced through physical, psychological, and social factors. This study indicates that weight has cognitive, affective, and behavioral properties. Therefore, to fully address a person’s issue with weight, those three components should be taken into consideration.

In addition, this study also has practical implications regarding interpersonal communication, for this study suggests that communication could be a component of weight identity. Participants noted that comments from family members, friends, and significant others influenced their self-perception regarding their weight. Thus, this study could be applied to interpersonal contexts regarding talking to others about their weight. For example, this study could be used to help develop training for parents in how to talk to their daughters about weight in an effective way that will not alienate their daughters or drive them to harmful action regarding their eating and exercise behaviors.

Similarly, the findings indicate that women of all body types have insecurities with their bodies and need to hear positive messages from both family members and external sources. Thus, the practical interpersonal findings of this study could also be used to develop training for groups that specialize in developing young girls' self-esteem, such as The Girl Scouts or Girls in Action.

Finally, this study could be applied to the context of intimate relationships. Participants reported that they often talked about their weight with their significant others. Those conversations were usually sources of positive feedback about their weight. Thus, this study could be used to develop techniques for how to support one's partner positively regarding weight.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Online Survey**

#### **Internet Information Statement**

The Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand the relationship between weight, self esteem, stress and family relationships. This will entail your completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire packet is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaires should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of the relationship between weight, self esteem, stress and family relationships. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary.

This data will be used to pre-screen for another study. Should your responses qualify you for participation in this study, you will be contacted by the primary researcher to schedule a follow-up interview. Thus, your responses will not be anonymous but will remain confidential.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are at least age eighteen. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, or email [mdenning@ku.edu](mailto:mdenning@ku.edu).

Sincerely,

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### **Research Credit**

In order to receive research participation for this study, please provide the following information:

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your COMS instructor's Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your COMS instructor's First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide an email address that you check regularly: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please indicate the following statements relate to your family by indicating whether you (1) *Strongly Disagree*, (2) *Generally Disagree*, (3) *Undecided*, (4) *Generally Agree*, or (5) *Strongly Agree*.

1. Family members are involved in each others' lives.
2. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.
3. We get along better with people outside our family than inside.
4. We spend too much time together.
5. There are strict consequences for breaking rules in our family.
6. We never seem to get organized in our family
7. Family members feel very close to each other.
8. Parents equally share leadership in our family.
9. Family members seem to avoid contact with each other when at home.
10. Family members feel pressured to spend most free time together.
11. There are clear consequences when a family member does something wrong.
12. It is hard to know who the leader is in our family.
13. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.
14. Discipline is fair in our family.
15. Family members know very little about the friends of other family members.
16. Family members are too dependent on each other.
17. Our family has a rule for almost every possible situation.
18. Things do not get done in our family.
19. Family members consult other family members on important decisions.
20. My family is able to adjust to change when necessary.
21. Family members are on their own when there is a problem to be solved.
22. Family members have little need for friends outside the family.
23. Our family is highly organized.
24. It is unclear who is responsible for things (chores, activities) in our family.
25. Family members like to spend some of their free time with each other.
26. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
27. Our family seldom does things together.
28. We feel too connected to each other.
29. Our family becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans or routines.
30. There is no leadership in our family.
31. Although family members have individual interests, they still participate in family activities.
32. We have clear rules and roles in our family.
33. Family members seldom depend on each other.
34. We resent family members doing things outside the family.
35. It is important to follow the rules in our family.
36. Our family has a hard time keeping track of who does various household tasks.
37. Our family has a good balance of separateness and closeness.
38. When problems arise, we compromise.
39. Family members mainly operate independently.
40. Family members feel guilty if they want to spend time away from the family.
41. Once a decision is made, it is very difficult to modify that decision.

42. Our family feels hectic and disorganized.
43. Family members are satisfied with how they communicate with each other.
44. Family members are very good listeners.
45. Family members express affection to each other.
46. Family members are able to ask each other for what they want.
47. Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other.
48. Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other.
49. When family members ask questions of each other, they get honest answers.
50. Family members try to understand each other's feelings.
51. When angry, family members seldom say negative things about each other.
52. Family members express their true feelings to each other.

**Directions:** Please indicate the following statements relate to your family by indicating whether you (1) *Very Dissatisfied*, (2) *Somewhat Dissatisfied*, (3) *Generally Satisfied*, (4) *Very Satisfied*, or (5) *Extremely Satisfied*.

1. The degree of closeness between family members.
2. Your family's ability to cope with stress.
3. Your family's ability to be flexible.
4. Your family's ability to share positive experiences.
5. The quality of communication between family members.
6. Your family's ability to resolve conflicts.
7. The amount of time you spend together as a family.
8. The way problems are discussed.
9. The fairness of criticism in your family.
10. Family members concern for each other.

**Think of your family life in answering the following questions. Please indicate on the scale how well these statements respond to your family (1 = Almost never; 2 = Once in a While; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Almost always).**

**When we face difficulties or problems in our family, we respond by:**

1. Sharing our difficulties with relatives
2. Seeking encouragement and support from friends
3. Knowing we have a power to solve major problems
4. Seeking information and advice from persons in other families who have faced the same or similar problems
5. Seeking advice from relatives (grandparents, etc.)
6. Seeking assistance from community agencies and programs designed to help families in our situation.
7. Knowing that we have the strength within our own family to solve our problems
8. Receiving gifts and favors from neighbors (e.g., food, taking in the mail, etc.)
9. Seeking information and advice from the family doctor
10. Asking neighbors for favors and assistance



11. Facing the problems “head on” and trying to get the solutions right away
12. Watching television
13. Showing that we are strong
14. Attending church services
15. Accepting stressful events as a fact of life
16. Sharing concerns with close friends
17. Knowing luck plays a big part in how well we are able to solve family problems
18. Exercising with friends to stay fit and reduce tension
19. Accepting that difficulties occur unexpectedly
20. Doing things with relatives (get-togethers, dinners, etc.)
21. Seeking professional counseling and help for family difficulties
22. Believing we can handle our own problems
23. Participating in church activities
24. Defining the family problem in a more positive way so that we do not become too discouraged
25. Asking relatives how they feel about problems we face
26. Feeling that no matter what we do to prepare, we will have difficulty handling problems
27. Seeking advice from a minister
28. Believing if we wait long enough, the problem will go away
29. Sharing problems with neighbors
30. Having faith in God.

**Instructions:** Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate if you (1) *Strongly Disagree*, (2) *Generally Disagree*, (3) *Undecided*, (4) *Generally Agree*, or (5) *Strongly Agree*.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. \* At times, I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. \* I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. \* I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. \* I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. \* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

**Directions**

**Please answer the following questions regarding your general health**

1. Do you smoke cigarettes?
  1. Yes
  2. No (Skip to #4)
2. On average, how many cigarettes do you smoke a day?
  1. Less than a pack a week
  2. ½ a pack a day or less
  3. 1 pack a day
  4. 1 ½ packs a day
  5. 2 packs a day
  6. 2 ½ packs a day
  7. 3 or more packs a day
3. How long have you smoked this amount? \_\_\_\_\_ (answer and skip to number 8)
4. Have you ever used cigarettes on a regular basis?
  1. Yes
  2. No (Skip to #8)
5. How long has it been since you quit smoking? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many years did you smoke?
7. How long has it been since you quit smoking? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you consume alcohol?
  1. Yes
  2. No (Skip to #11)
9. In the past month, about how many alcoholic drinks per week did you consume? (A drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor)
  1. Less than 1 drink per week
  2. 1 to 5 drinks per week
  3. 6 to 10 drinks per week
  4. 11 to 15 drinks per week
  5. 16 to 20 drinks per week
  6. 21 or more drinks per week
10. How long have you consumed this amount of alcohol? (Answer and skip to #15)  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you ever consumed alcohol?

1. Yes
2. No (Skip to #15)

12. Prior to quitting, on average, how many alcoholic drinks did you consume per week?  
(A drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor)

1. Less than 1 drink per week
2. 1 to 5 drinks per week
3. 6 to 10 drinks per week
4. 11 to 15 drinks per week
5. 16 to 20 drinks per week
6. 21 or more drinks per week

13. How long did you consume this amount of alcohol? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How long has it been since you quit consuming alcohol? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you use illicit drugs (e.g., cocaine, marijuana)

1. Yes
2. No (Skip to #18)

16. How often do you use illicit drugs?

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Monthly
4. 3 to 4 times a year
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

17. How long have you used illicit drugs? \_\_\_\_\_ (Answer and skip to #22)

18. Have you ever used illicit drugs? (e.g., cocaine, marijuana)

1. Yes
2. No (Skip to #22)

19. Prior to quitting, on average, how often did you use illicit drugs?

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Monthly
4. 3 to 4 times a year
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

20. How long did you use illicit drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

21. How long has it been since you quit using illicit drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Are you trying to lose weight?

1. Yes (Skip to #25)
  2. No
23. Are you trying to gain weight?
1. Yes (Skip to #32)
  2. No
24. Are you trying to maintain your current weight, that is, to keep from gaining or losing weight?
1. Yes (Skip to #35)
  2. No
25. Are you on a diet?
1. Yes
  2. No
26. What type of diet are you on? \_\_\_\_\_
27. Are you eating less calories to lose weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
28. Are you eating less fat or carbohydrates to lose weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
29. Are you using physical activity or exercise to lose weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
30. Are you participating in a weight management program to help you lose weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
31. How long have you been trying to consistently lose weight? \_\_\_\_\_ (Skip to #35)
32. Are you eating more calories to gain weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
33. Are you eating foods high in fat to gain weight?
1. Yes
  2. No
34. How long have you been trying to consistently gain weight? \_\_\_\_\_

35. What is your current weight? \_\_\_\_\_

36. What is your height? \_\_\_\_\_

37. How would you describe yourself physically? What do you look like?

38. What personality characteristics do you have?

**Based on this slide scale, what percentages of these traits do you feel makes up who you are?**

Intelligence ————|—————

Gender ————|—————

Political Beliefs ————|—————

Weight ————|—————

Personality ————|—————

Religious Beliefs ————|—————

Occupation ————|—————

39. How closely do you identify with someone who has similar body shape as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

40. How closely do you identify with someone who is the same gender as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

41. How closely do you identify with someone who has similar political beliefs as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

42. How closely do you identify with someone who has similar religious beliefs as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

43. How closely do you identify with someone who has similar personality traits as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

44. How closely do you identify with someone who has similar intelligence as you?

Not Close at All      Not Close      Undecided      Somewhat Close      Very Close

45. How would you describe physically someone who is **under**weight? What would that person look like?

46. What personality characteristics would an **under**weight person have?

47. How would you describe physically someone who is **average weight**? What would that person look like?

48. What personality characteristics would an average **weight** person have?

49. How would you describe physically someone who is **over**weight? What would that person look like?

50. What personality characteristics would an **over**weight person have?

51. How would you describe physically someone who is obese? What would that person look like?

52. What personality characteristics would an **obese** person have?

**Directions:** Please circle the number that best describes your eating behavior.

	Almost Never	Once in a While	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
I am terrified about being overweight	1	2	3	4	5
I avoid eating when I am hungry	1	2	3	4	5
I find myself preoccupied with food	1	2	3	4	5
I have gone on eating binges where I feel that I may not be able to stop	1	2	3	4	5
I cut my food into small pieces	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of the calorie content of foods that I eat	1	2	3	4	5
I particularly avoid foods with a high carbohydrate content (i.e. bread, rice, potatoes, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that others would prefer if I ate more	1	2	3	4	5
I vomit after I have eaten	1	2	3	4	5
I feel extremely guilty after eating	1	2	3	4	5
I am preoccupied with a desire to be thinner	1	2	3	4	5
I think about burning up calories when I exercise	1	2	3	4	5
Other people think that I am too thin	1	2	3	4	5
I am preoccupied with the thought of having fat on my body	1	2	3	4	5
I take longer than others to eat my meals	1	2	3	4	5
I avoid foods with sugar in them	1	2	3	4	5
I eat diet foods	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that food controls my life	1	2	3	4	5
I display self-control around food	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that others pressure me to eat	1	2	3	4	5
I give too much time and thought to food	1	2	3	4	5
I feel uncomfortable after eating sweets	1	2	3	4	5
I engage in dieting behavior	1	2	3	4	5
I like my stomach to be empty	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy trying new rich foods	1	2	3	4	5
I have the impulse to vomit after meals	1	2	3	4	5

**Directions**

**Think of your family life in answering the following questions. Please**

		Almost Never	Once in a While	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
1	In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others	1	2	3	4	5
2	My parents often say something like "You'll know better when you grow up."	1	2	3	4	5
3	My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."	1	2	3	4	5
4	My parents often say something like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."	1	2	3	4	5
5	My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.	1	2	3	4	5
6	My parents often say something like "A child should not argue with adults."	1	2	3	4	5
7	My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My parents often say something like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."	1	2	3	4	5
9	My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an argument"	1	2	3	4	5
10	My parents often say something like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad"	1	2	3	4	5
11	I usually tell my parents what I'm thinking about things	1	2	3	4	5
12	When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I can tell my parents almost anything.	1	2	3	4	5
14	In our home, my parents usually have the last word.	1	2	3	4	5
15	In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions	1	2	3	4	5
16	My parents feel that it is important to be the boss	1	2	3	4	5
17	My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular	1	2	3	4	5



18	I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.	1	2	3	4	5
19	If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it.	1	2	3	4	5
20	My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.	1	2	3	4	5
21	My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My parents encourage me to express my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
23	My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
24	When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.	1	2	3	4	5
25	We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day	1	2	3	4	5
26	In our family we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future	1	2	3	4	5

**Directions:** For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way describe by indicating (1) *Strongly Disagree*, (2) *Disagree*, (3) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (4) *Somewhat Agree*, (5) *Agree*, or (6) *Strongly Agree*.

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
3. My family really tries to help me.
4. I get emotional help and support I need from my family.
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.
6. My friends really try to help me.
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.

**Directions:** For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way describe by indicating (1) *Never*, (2) *Rarely*, (3) *Sometimes*, (4) *Quite Often*, or (5) *Very Often*.

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nerves and “stressed”?
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?
13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?
14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

How would you characterize your mother in terms of her weight?

- ☐ Severely underweight
- ☐ Underweight
- ☐ Normal
- ☐ Overweight
- ☐ Obese
- ☐ Morbidly obese

How would you characterize your father in terms of his weight?

- ☐ Severely underweight
- ☐ Underweight
- ☐ Normal
- ☐ Overweight
- ☐ Obese
- ☐ Morbidly obese

What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

I identify with this racial/ ethnic group:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ African American/ Black
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Asian/ Pacific Islander
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/ Latino(a)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Native American
6. \_\_\_\_\_ White/Caucasian
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: Weight Identity and Communication**

**Participant Identification Number:**

Date:

Location:

#### **Conceptualizing Weight Identity**

1. How would you describe yourself physically?
  - a. What would you tell people about if you had to describe your appearance to someone?
2. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
  - a. Are they the same size as you? Overweight? Underweight?

#### **The Development of Weight Identity**

6. When you were younger, did anyone ever comment about your weight?
  - a. What was said?
  - b. Who said it?
  - c. How did it make you feel?
  - d. Did you take any actions regarding those comments?
7. How was your family around food?
  - a. Did your family have rules about food? Were you not allowed certain foods? Or not allowed to eat foods before or after certain times?
  - b. How did your family typically eat their meals?
    - i. Did you have family dinners?
    - ii. What did you discuss?

8. How often do you talk about your weight?
9. With whom do you talk about your weight?
  - a. What are the general body shapes of the people with whom you are talking about your weight?
  - b. Where do you have these conversations?
  - c. Do you initiate conversations or do they?
  - d. Describe the best conversation you have had with someone about your weight.  
What characteristics of this conversation made it positive?
  - e. Describe the worst conversation that you ever had with someone about your weight. What characteristics made it such a negative experience?
10. With whom are you NOT comfortable talking about your weight?
11. Do you identify with other people of your shape?
12. How important is your weight to who you are?
13. Have you ever lost a large amount of weight (over 10 lbs)?
  - a. How much?
  - b. When?
  - c. Why?
  - d. How did you feel before you lost it?
  - e. What made you decide to lose it?
  - f. How did you feel after?
14. How would you describe weight in your family? Is it an important factor?
  - a. Is weight talked about in your family?
  - b. Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

- i. Is anything said about them?
  - ii. Are they treated differently?
- c. Is anyone in your family underweight?
  - i. Is anything said about them?
  - ii. Are they treated differently?

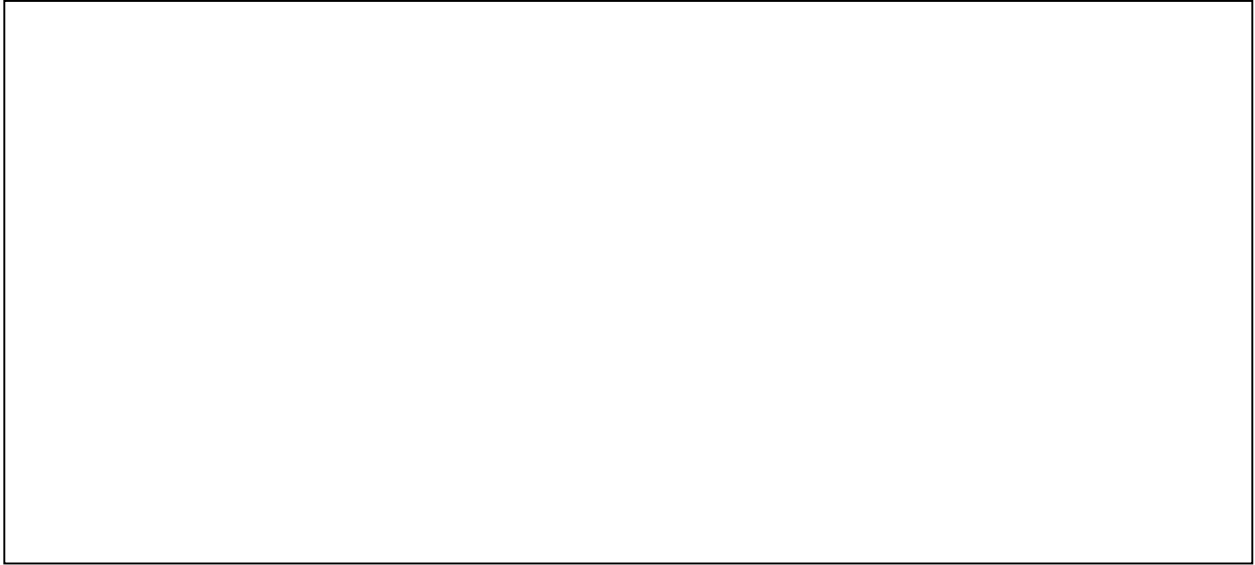
### **Situations of Weight Identity Prevalence**

- 15. Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?
  - a. If yes, can you describe a situation that made you feel that way?
  - b. What made you feel that way? Did someone say something? Was it the atmosphere?
  - c. Did you take any action afterward to change how you felt?
- 16. Are there situations in which you feel your sex is made more important than other parts of your identity?
  - a. What situations make you aware that you are a female? Can you describe one of those situations?
  - b. What made you feel that way? Did someone say something? Was it the atmosphere?
  - c. Did you take any action afterward to change how you felt?

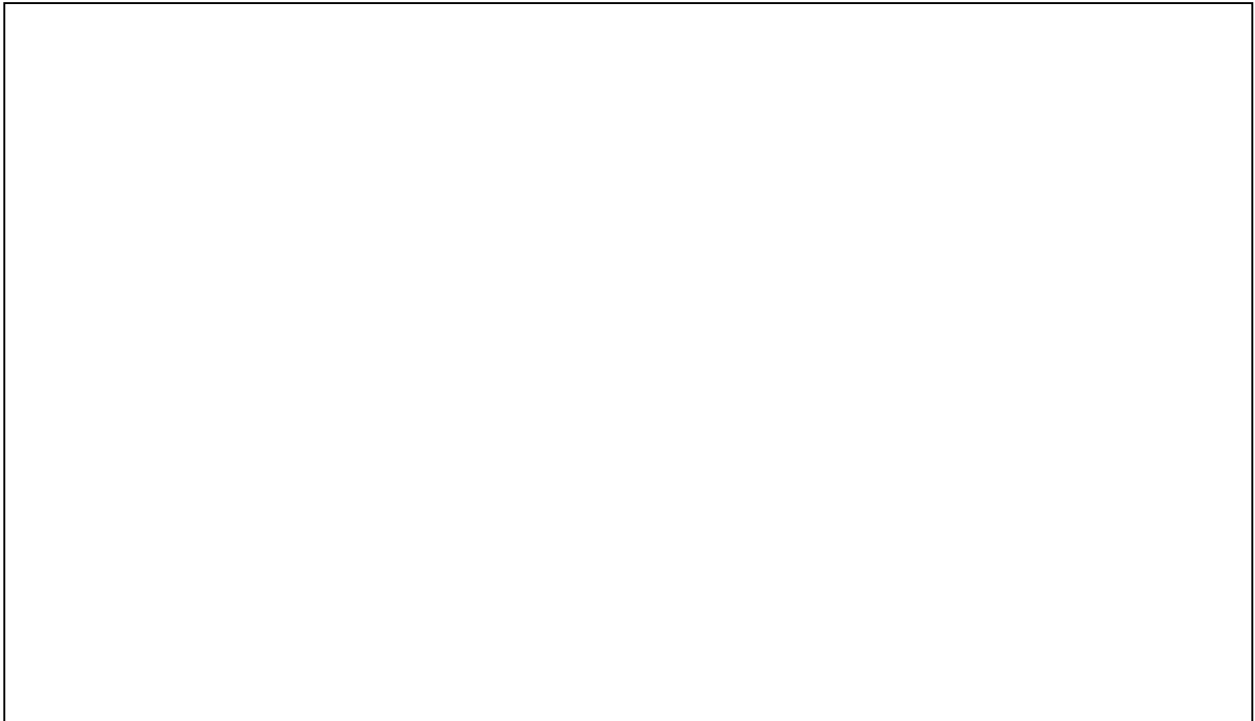
## Appendix C

### Instructions for Drawings

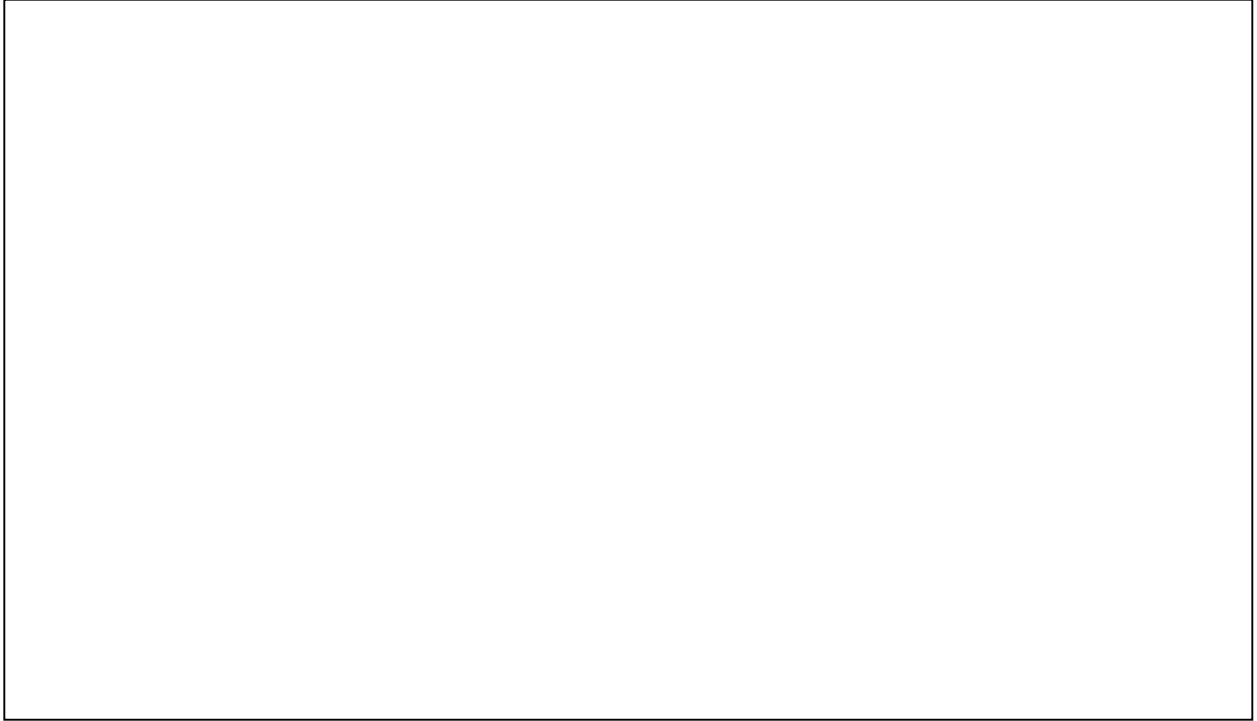
Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing of an underweight person.

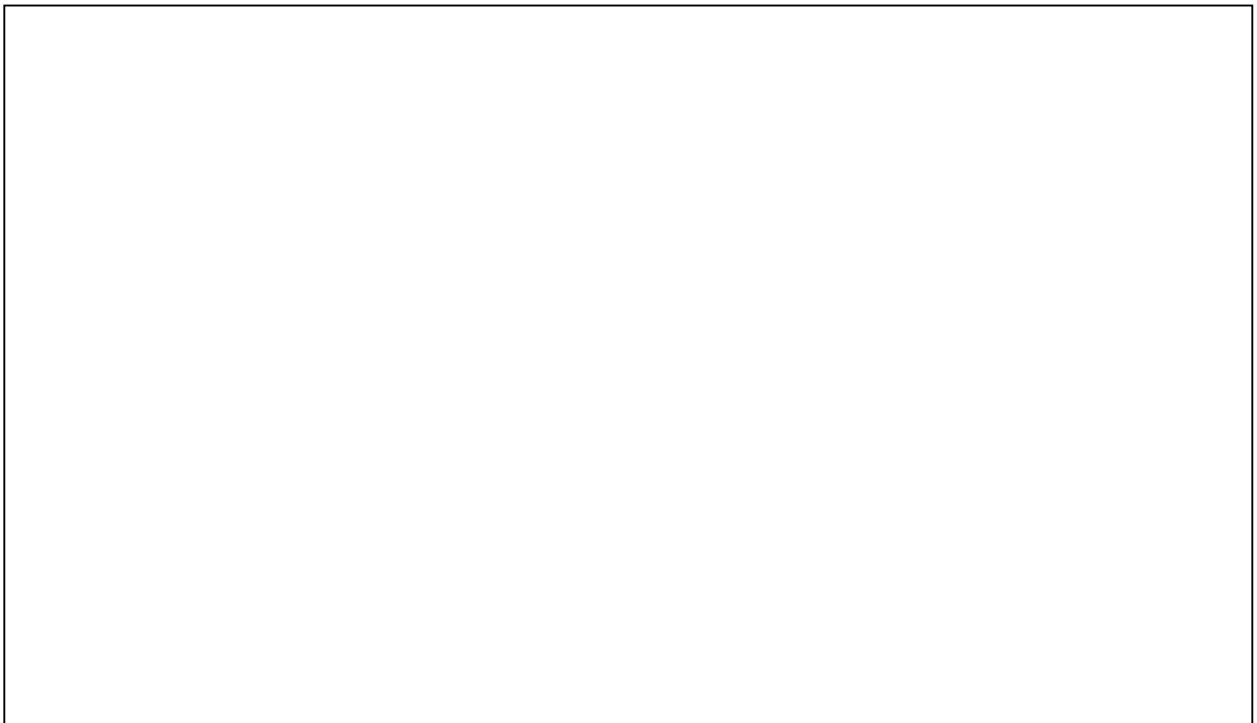
Please draw what you believe an average weight person looks like in the box provided.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing of an average weight person.

**Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing of an overweight person.

**Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing of an obese person.

**Now, please circle the drawing that you feel best represents you.**



**Appendix D**  
**Figures and Tables**

Figure 1

Drawing by Gini, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

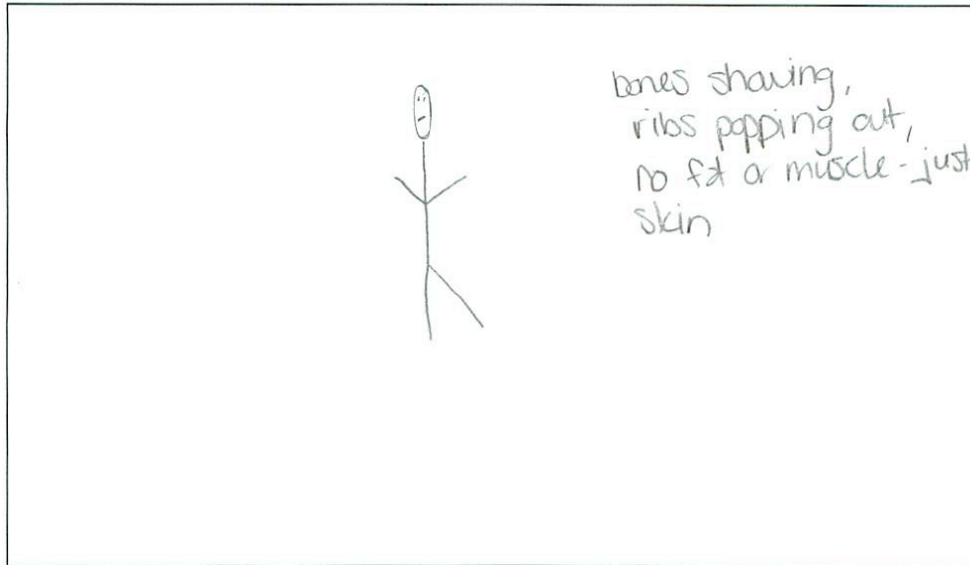


Figure 2

Drawing by Gini, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

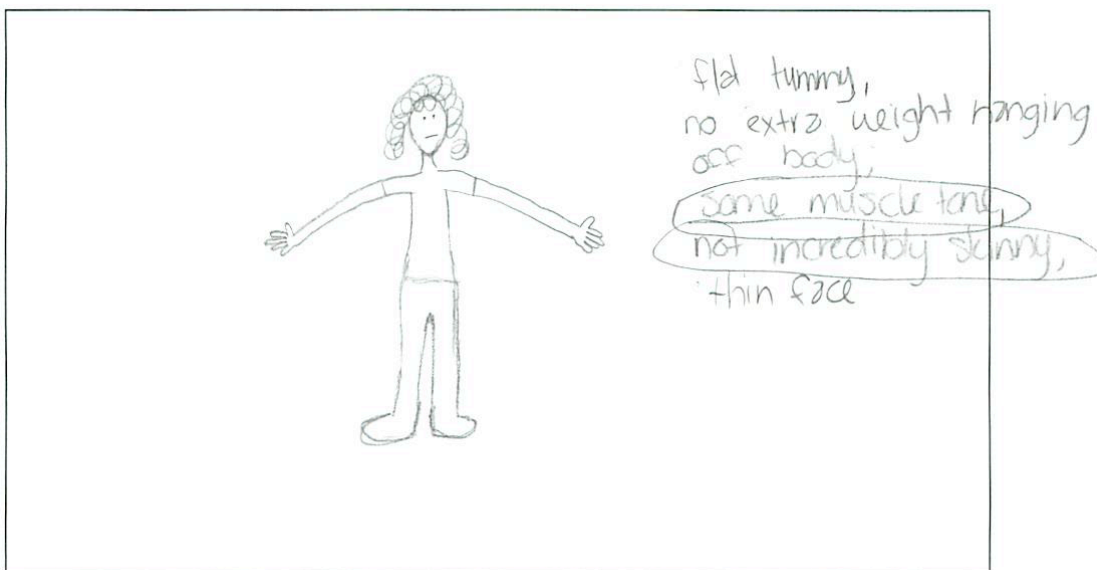


Figure 3

Drawing by Gini, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

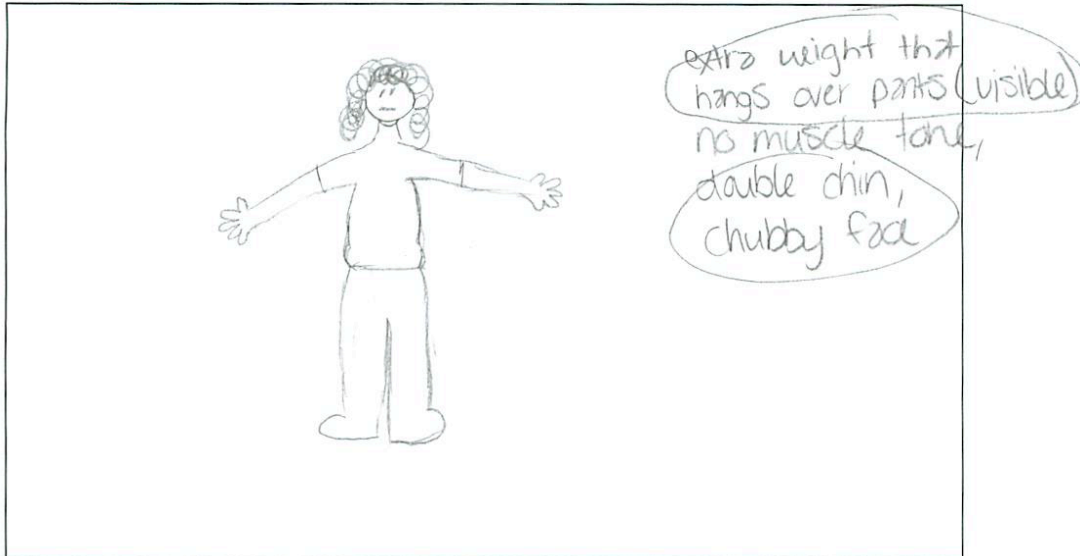


Figure 4

Drawing by Gini, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

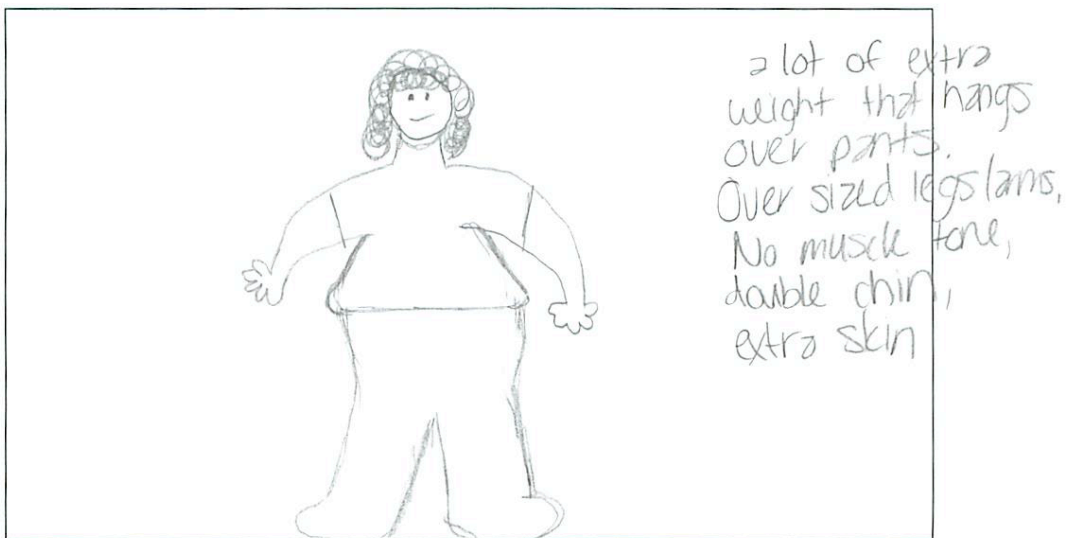


Figure 5

Drawing by Erin, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

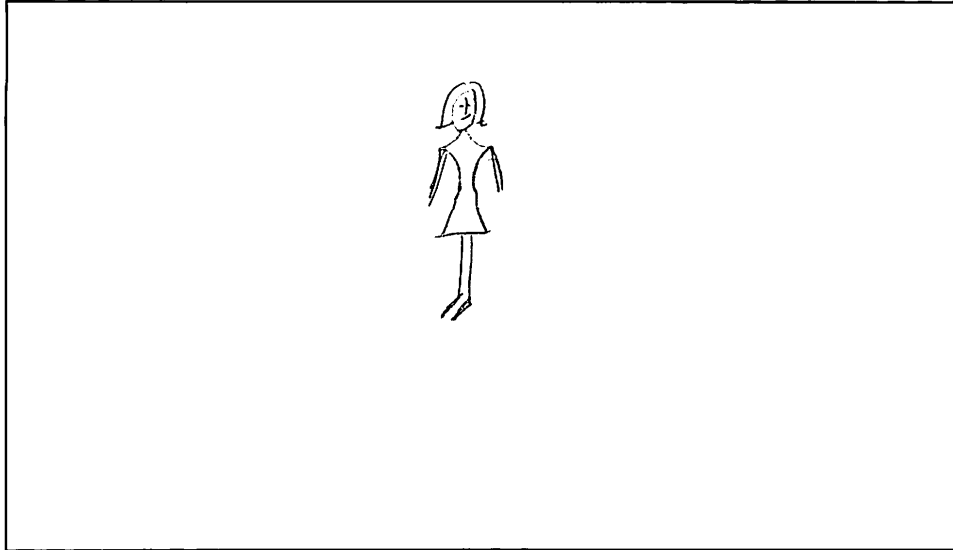


Figure 6

Drawing by Erin, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

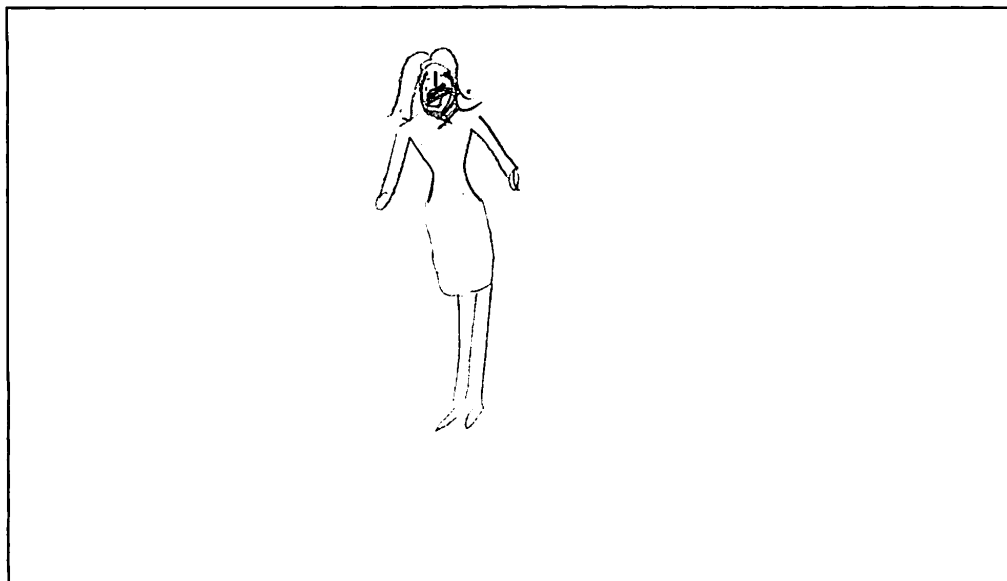


Figure 7

Drawing by Erin, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



Figure 8

Drawing by Erin, an average weight female

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



Figure 9

Drawing by Kara, an underweight female

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

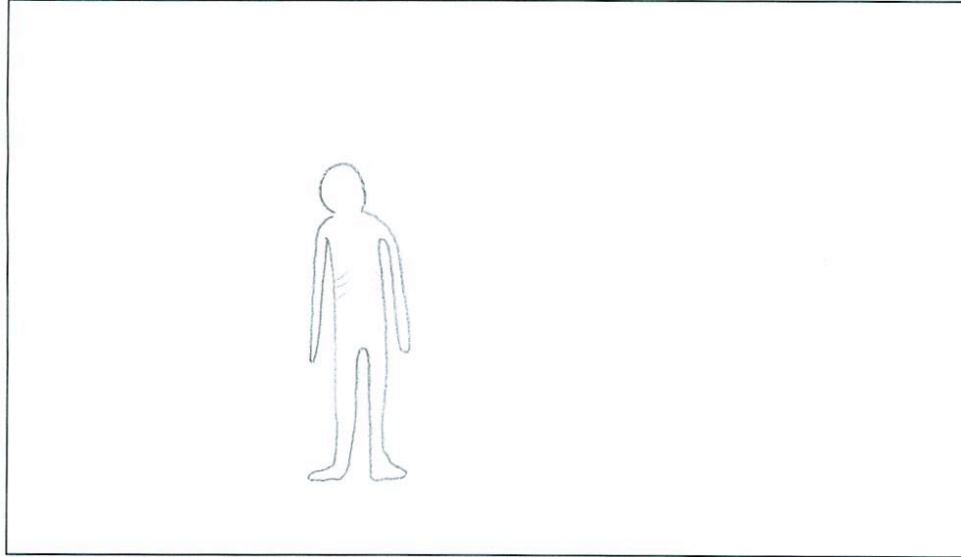


Figure 10

Drawing by Kara, an underweight female

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

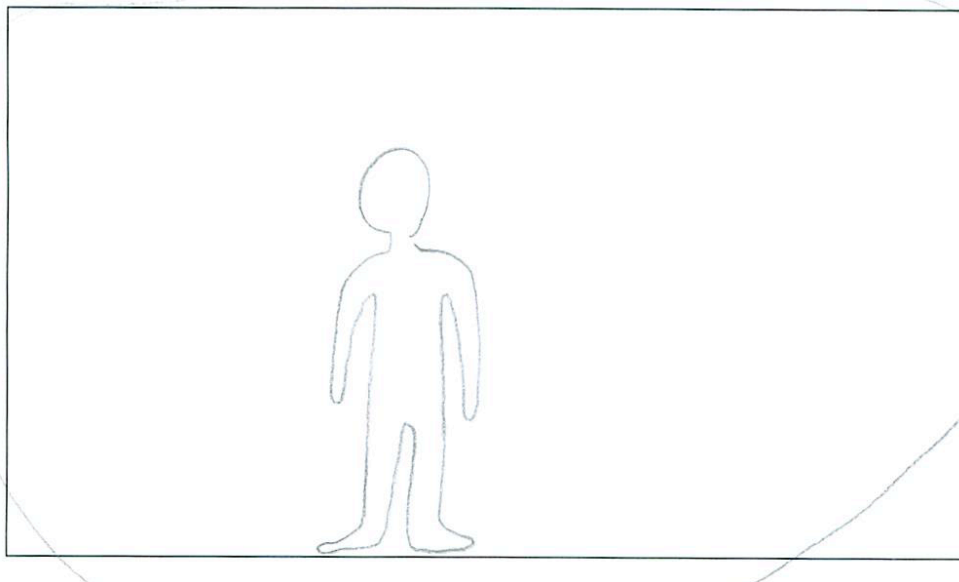


Figure 11

Drawing by Kara, an underweight female

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

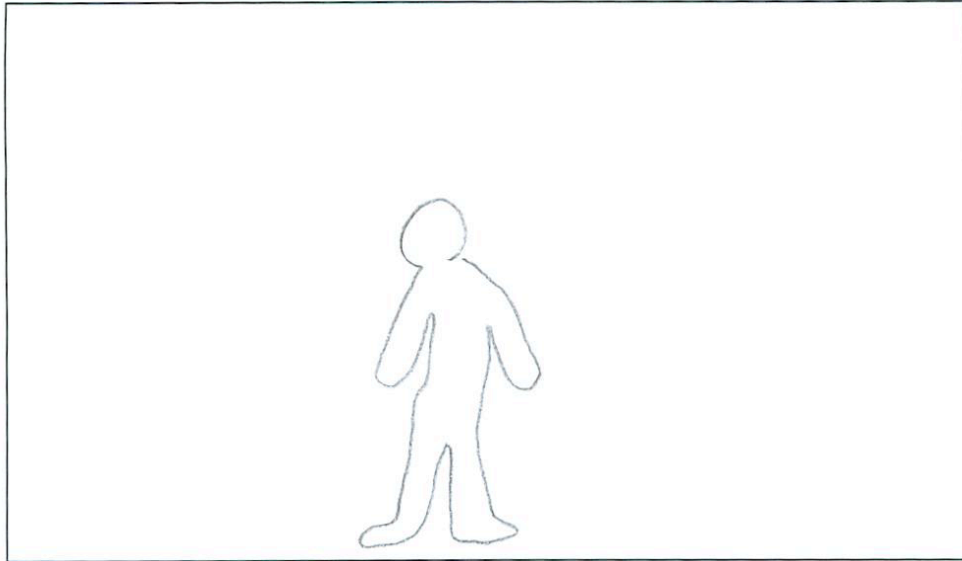


Figure 12

Drawing by Kara, an underweight female

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

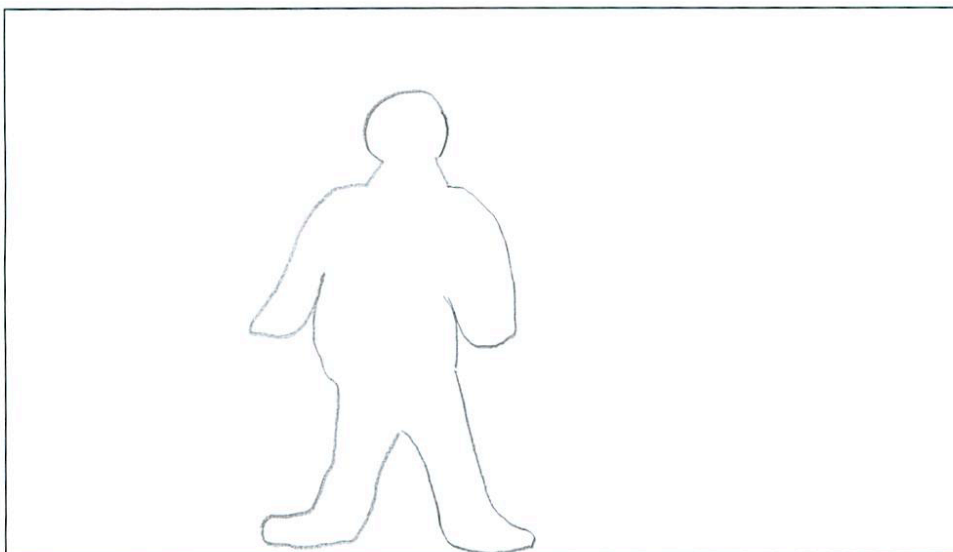


Figure 13

Drawing by Amanda, an overweight female

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

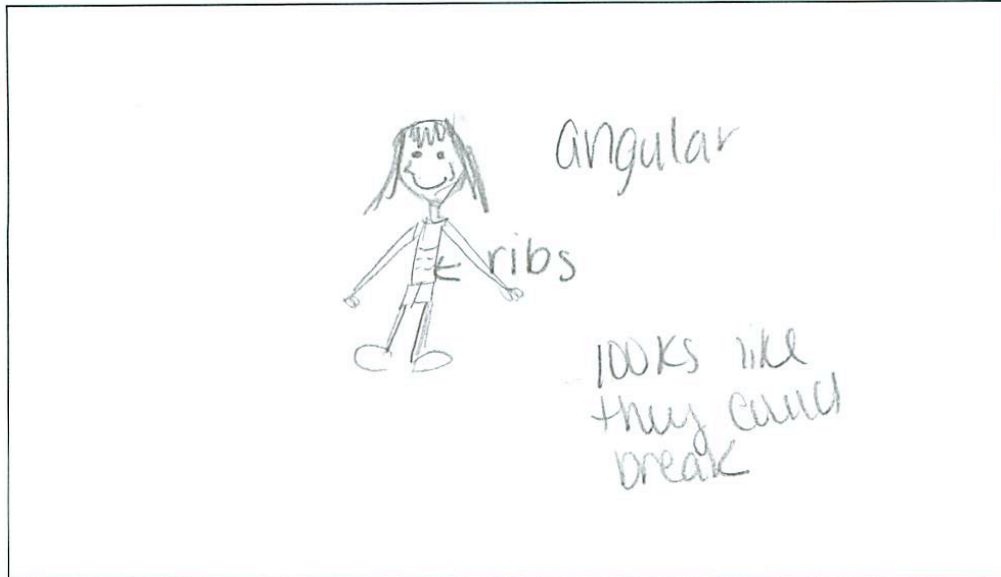


Figure 14

Drawing by Amanda, an overweight female

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.





Figure 15

Drawing by Amanda, an overweight female

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



Figure 16

Drawing by Amanda, an overweight female

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



Table 1

*Themes for Research Question 1: Does a Weight Identity Exist?*

	Overall Themes	Underweight Themes	Average weight Themes	Overweight and Obese Themes
Physical descriptions of self	Health  Height	Thinness  Qualifying or explaining thinness	Normal or Average  Disliking one's body	Being above normal
Descriptions of friends body shapes		Thinner than friends Average Friends	Friends with various body types Friends bigger than participants Friends the same size as participants	Friends with various body types Friends smaller than participants
Talking about weight		Parents and Friends Not discussing weight	Friends and roommates Significant others	Family Member  Significant others  Friends
Frequency of talking about weight		Not talking about weight	Talking about weight regularly  Not talking about weight	Talking about weight regularly  Not talking about weight
Not comfortable talking about weight		Willing to talk about weight with anyone	Willing to talk about weight with anyone Uncomfortable talking about weight with family	Uncomfortable talking about weight with family Uncomfortable talking about weight with friends
Identifying with others of their shape		Mixed yes and not answers	Identifying with others of their shape Not identifying with others of their shape	Identifying with others of their shape Not identifying with others of their shape
Importance of weight		Weight is important	Weight is important  Weight is unimportant	Weight is important  Weight is unimportant
Drawings	Heights increased Midsection increased			

Table 2

*Themes for Research Question 2: Communication and Weight Identity*

	Underweight Themes	Average weight Themes	Overweight and Obese Themes
Past comments about weight	Comments about being too thin	Comments about being overweight Comments about being underweight	Comments about health Negative comments
Best conversation about weight	Conversations about being fine as they are	Conversations about looking good  Conversations about having lost weight	Conversations about having lost weight
Worst conversation about weight		Conversations about being too thin  Conversations about being too fat	Conversations with family members about weight Conversations about fitting into clothes

Table 3

*Themes for Research Question 3: Salience of Weight Identity*

	Underweight Themes	Average weight Themes	Overweight and Obese Themes
Salience of weight identity	When others brought up the subject of weight	Clothes	Clothes  When around smaller females

Table 4

*Themes for Research Question 4: Actual Weight and Weight Identity*

	Underweight Themes	Average weight Themes	Overweight and Obese Themes
Drawings	Identified themselves as normal	Identified themselves as normal	Identified themselves as overweight and obese
		Identified themselves as overweight	Identified themselves as normal

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Percentage Identification and BMI*

BMI	Identification Target	Mean	Standard Deviation
Underweight	Intelligence	65.52	21.09
	Sex	56.84	26.81
	Political Beliefs	28.64	26.02
	Weight	36.60	29.28
	Personality	85.40	19.11
	Religious Beliefs	43.48	32.70
	Occupation	24.72	30.91
Average weight	Intelligence	63.72	24.43
	Sex	58.20	32.89
	Political Beliefs	24.33	24.89
	Weight	34.42 <sub>a</sub>	28.17
	Personality	82.21	22.11
	Religious Beliefs	42.05	33.99
	Occupation	33.96	29.60
Overweight/Obese	Intelligence	65.00	25.02
	Sex	58.82	32.40
	Political Beliefs	28.08	25.92
	Weight	46.17 <sub>a</sub>	31.23
	Personality	80.18	23.44
	Religious Beliefs	41.56	33.27
	Occupation	33.91	31.68

Note. Means in the same cluster that share the same subscripts differ significantly at  $p < .002$  in the Fischer LSD post hoc test.

Figure 17

Underweight Participant 1:

Mandi's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

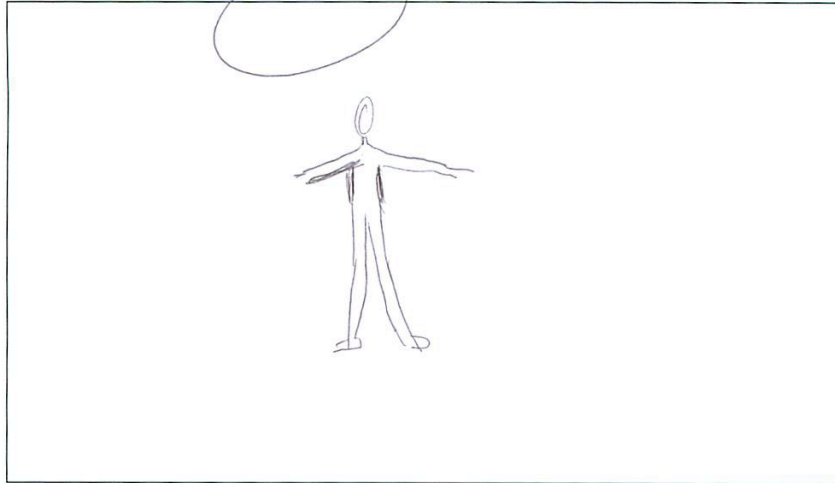


Figure 18

Underweight Participant 2:

Kara's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

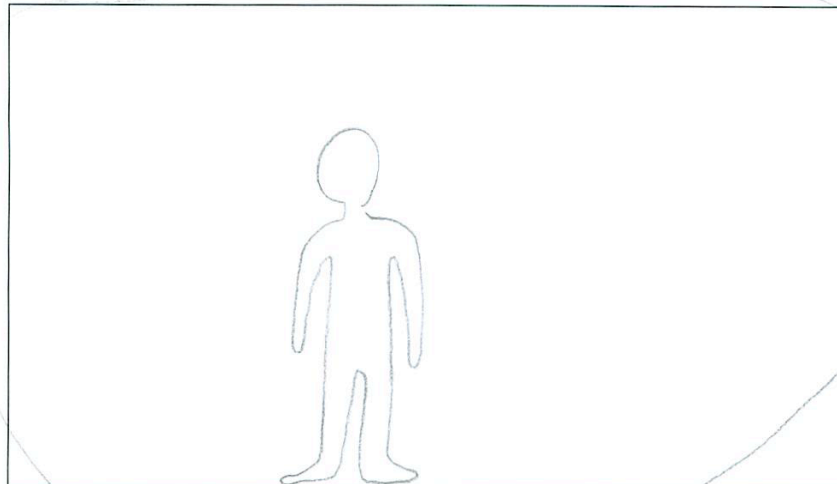


Figure 19

Underweight Participant 3:

Susan's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

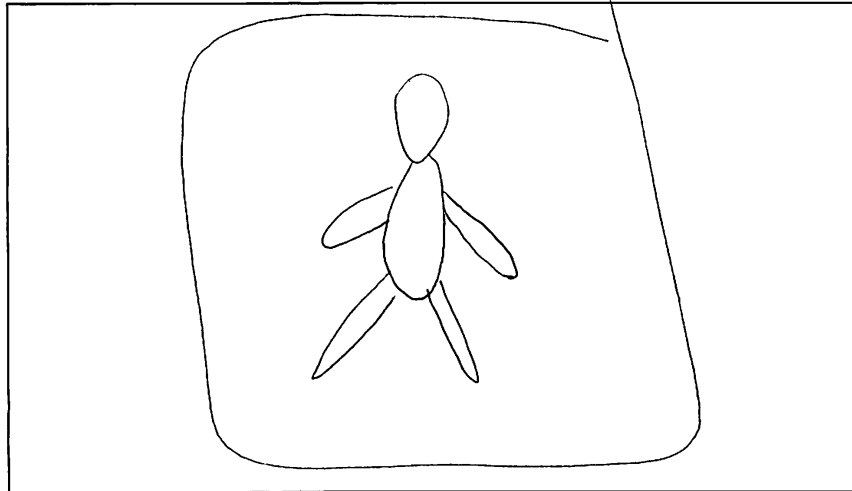


Figure 20

Underweight Participant 4:

Jennifer's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

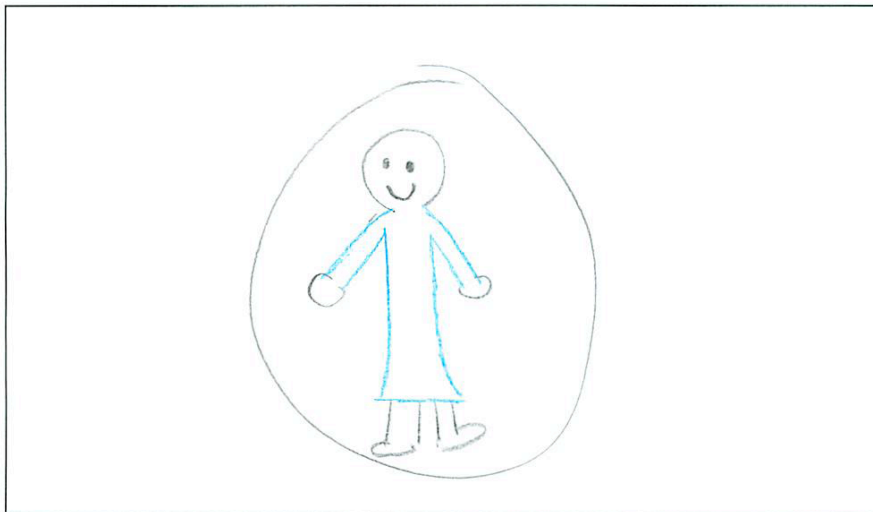




Figure 21

Average weight Participant 1:

Wendy's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

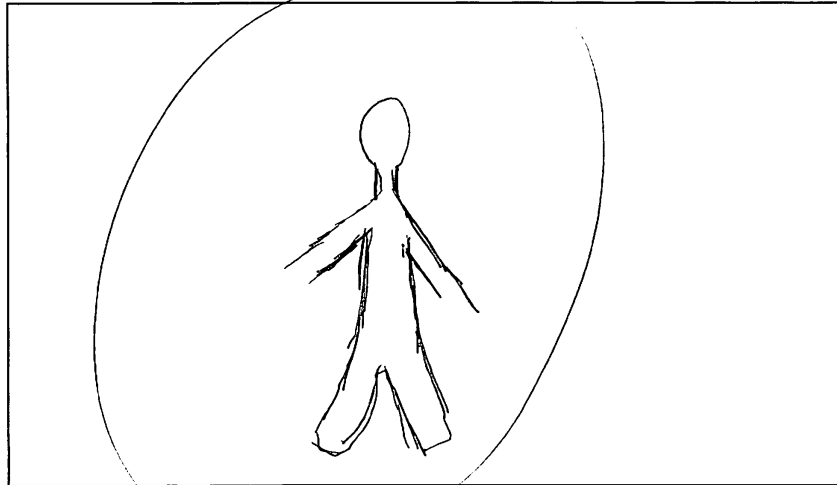


Figure 22

Average weight Participant 2:

Julie's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

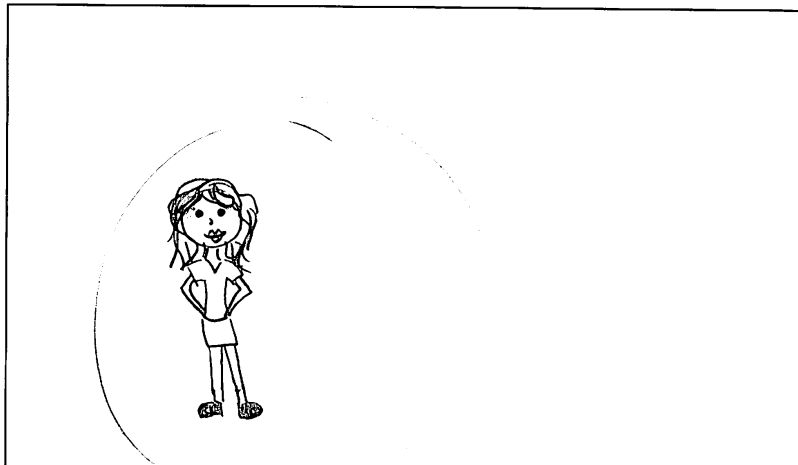


Figure 23

Average Weight Participant 3:

Alex's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

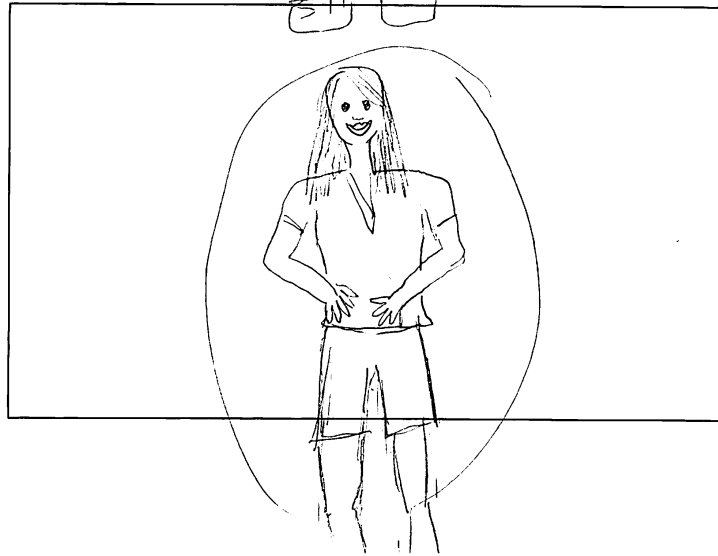


Figure 24

Average Weight Participant 4:

Phyllis's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

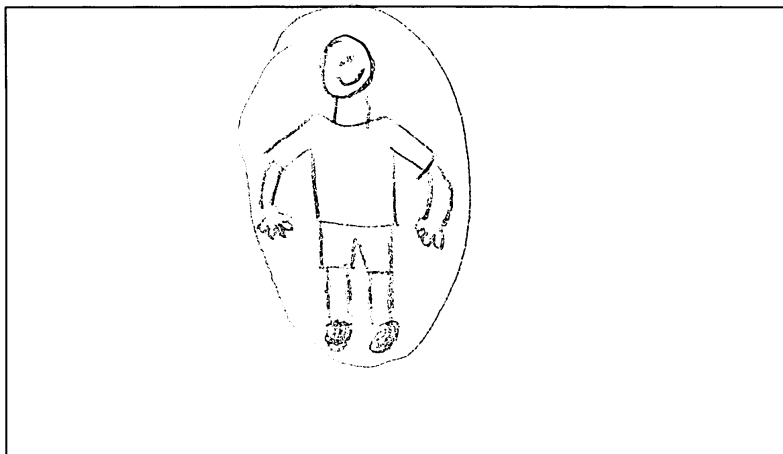


Figure 25

Average weight Participant 5:

Jessica's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

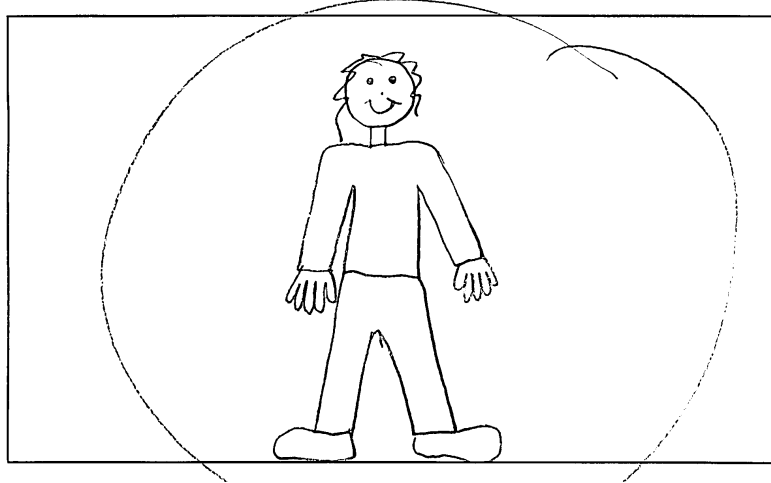


Figure 26

Average weight Participant 6:

Ashley's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Figure 27

Average Weight Participant 7:

Gala's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

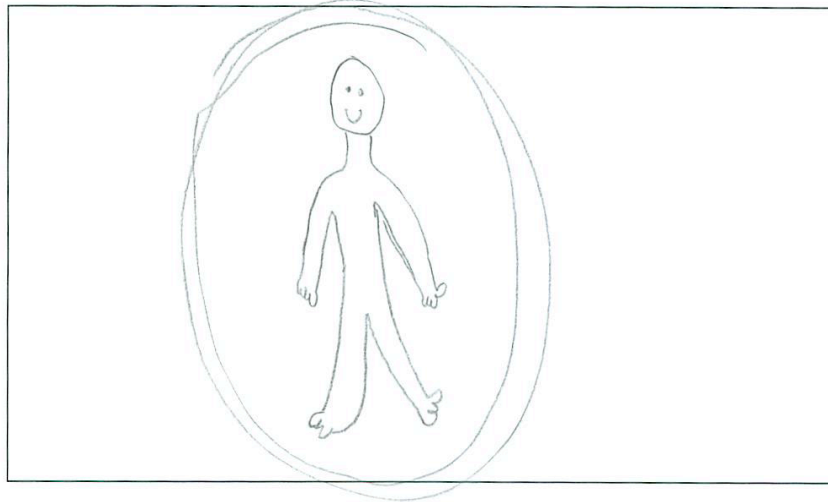


Figure 28

Average weight Participant 8:

Kristine's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

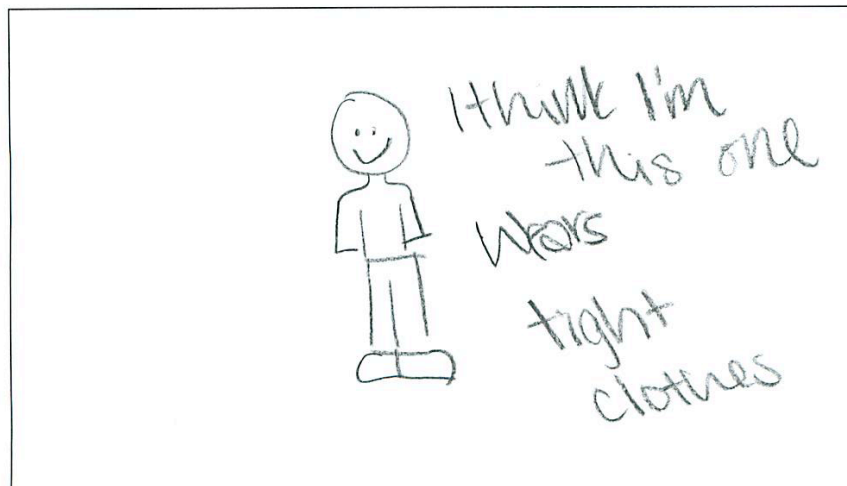


Figure 29

Average Weight Participant 9:

Gini's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

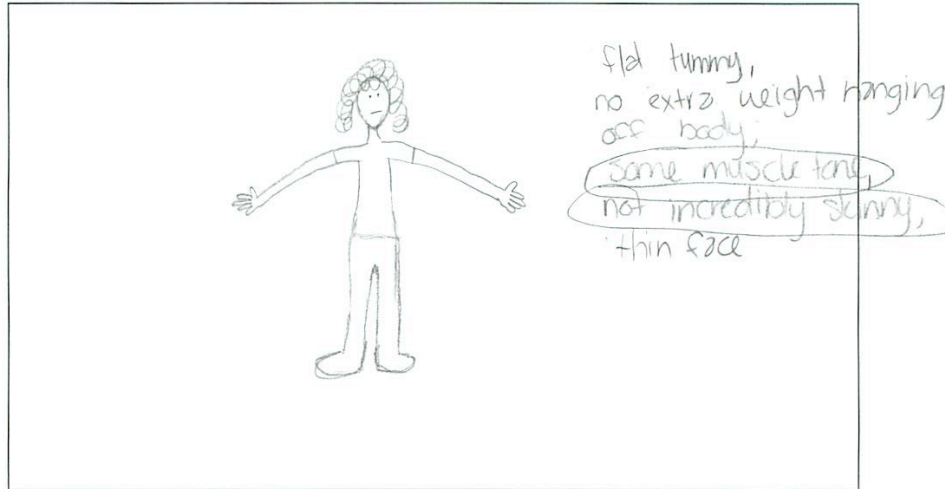


Figure 30

Average Weight Participant 10:

Gabrielle's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

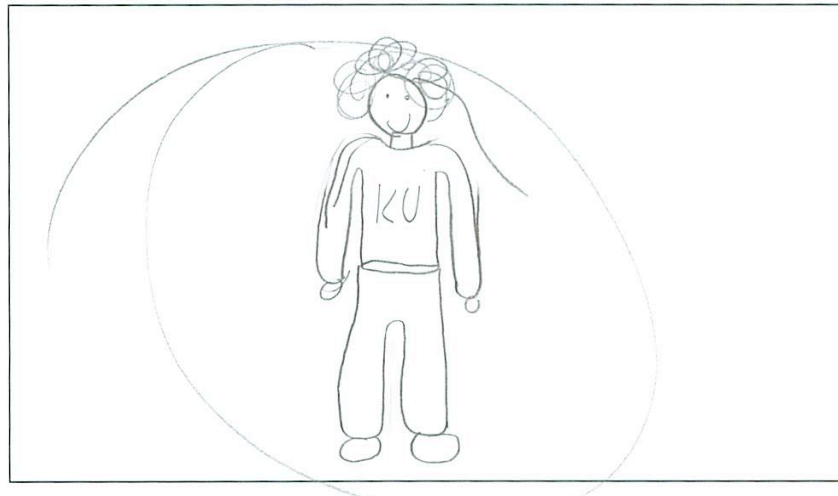


Figure 31

Average Weight Participant 11:

Erin's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

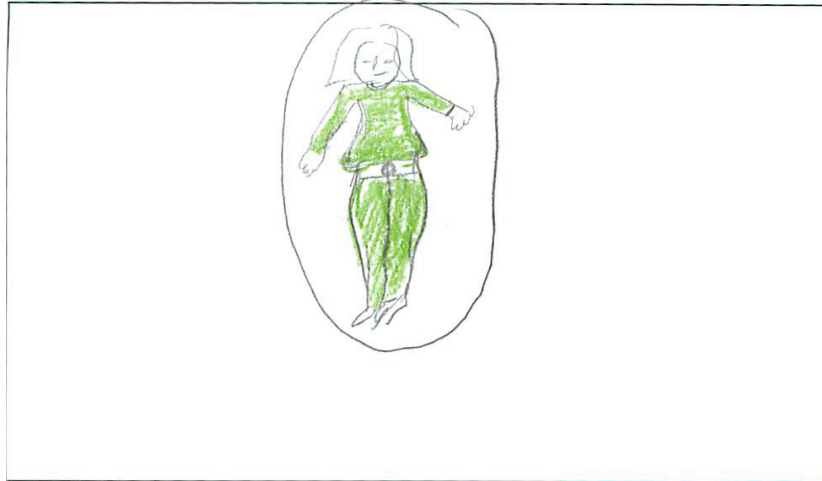


Figure 32

Overweight Participant 1:

Amie's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

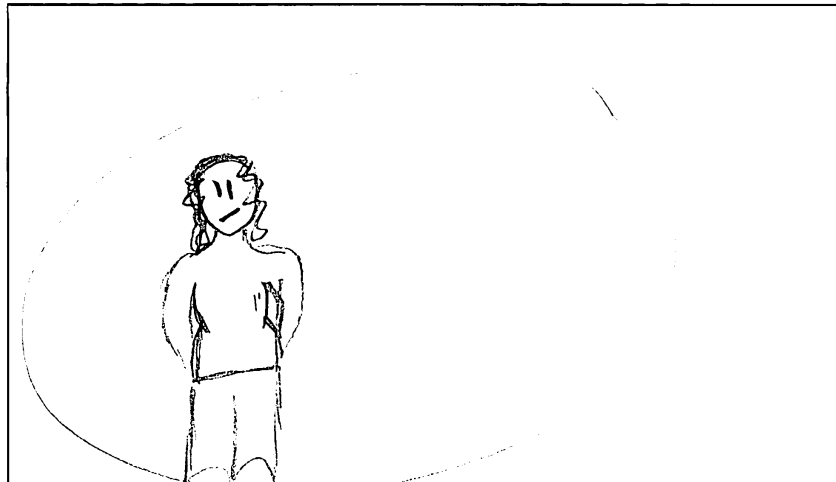


Figure 33

Overweight Participant 2:

Kristin's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Figure 34

Overweight Participant 3:

Emily's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

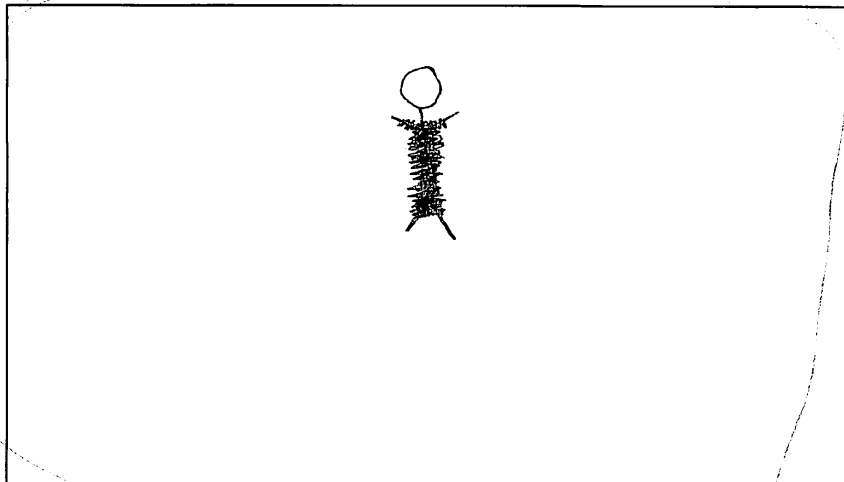


Figure 35

Overweight Participant 4:

Sherrie's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

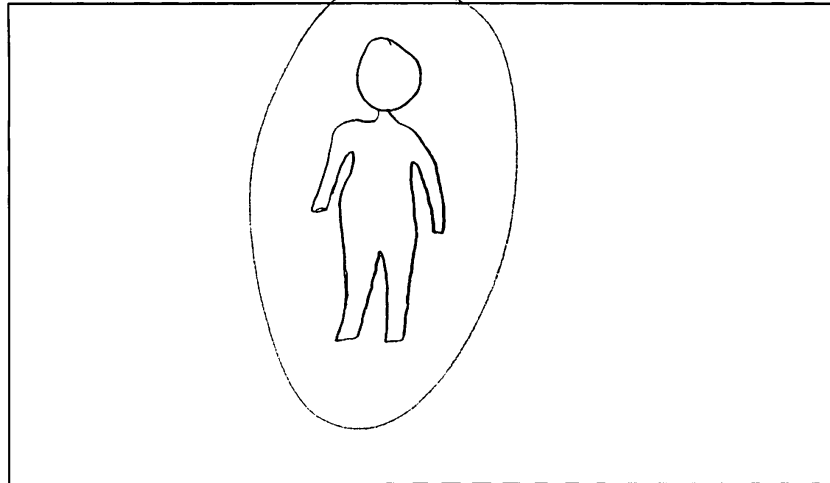


Figure 36

Overweight Participant 5:

Hema's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

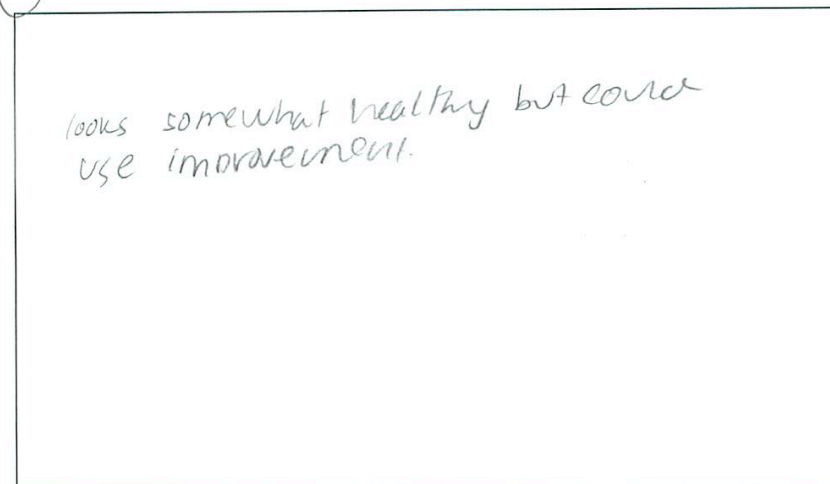




Figure 37

Overweight Participant 6:

Sara's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

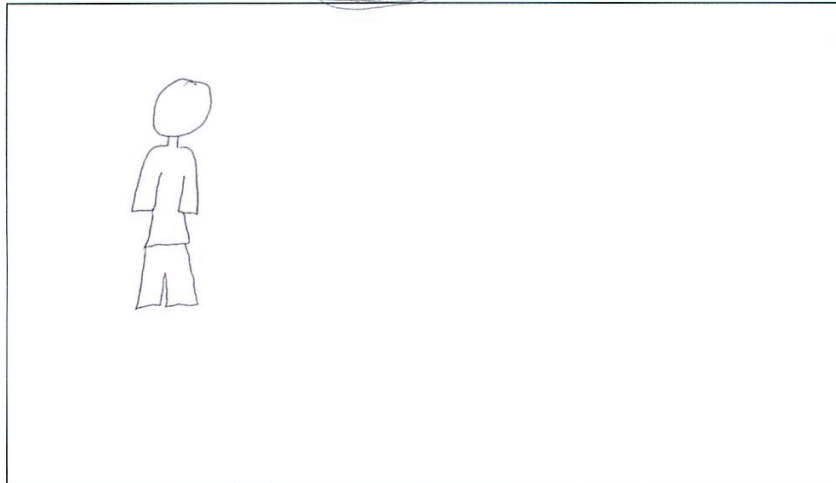


Figure 38

Overweight participant 7:

Amanda's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

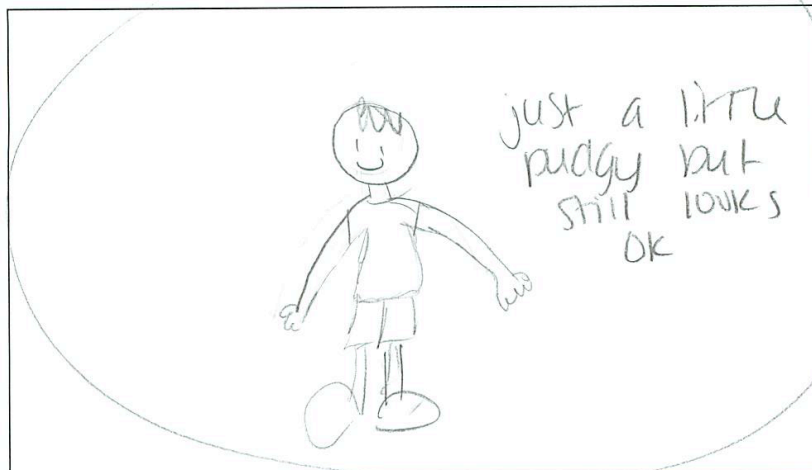


Figure 39

Overweight Participant 8:

Abby's Drawing

Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

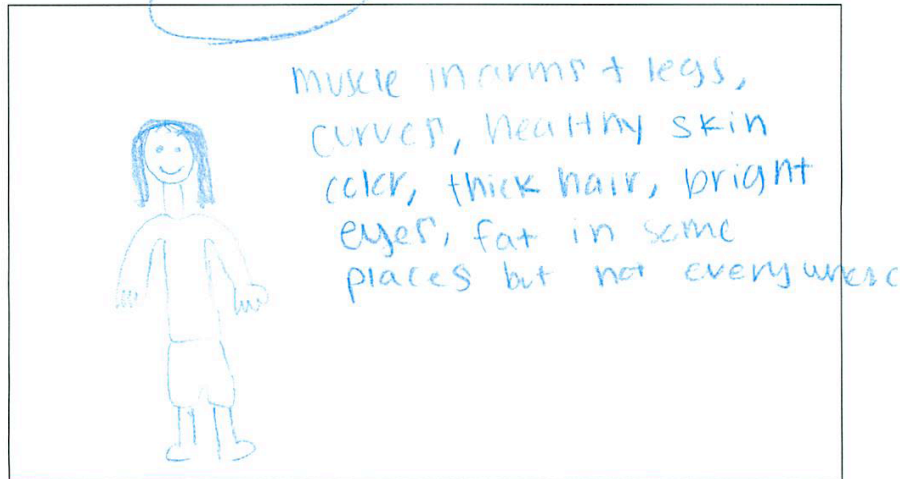


Figure 40

Obese Participant 1:

Mary's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

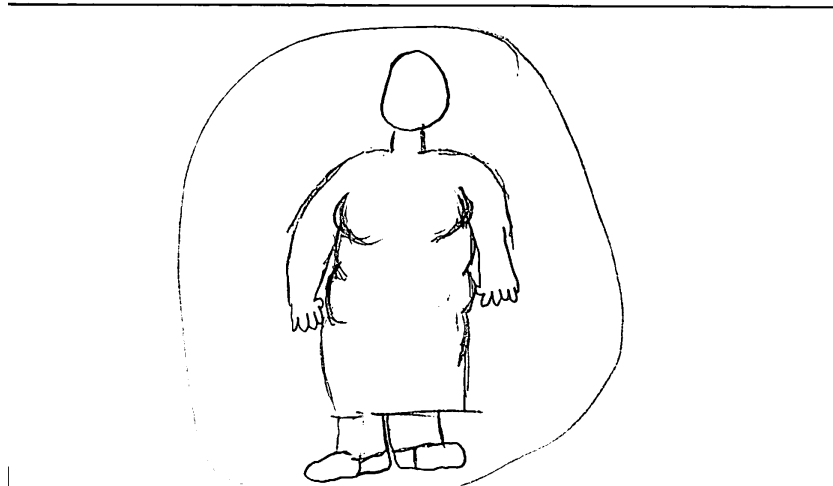
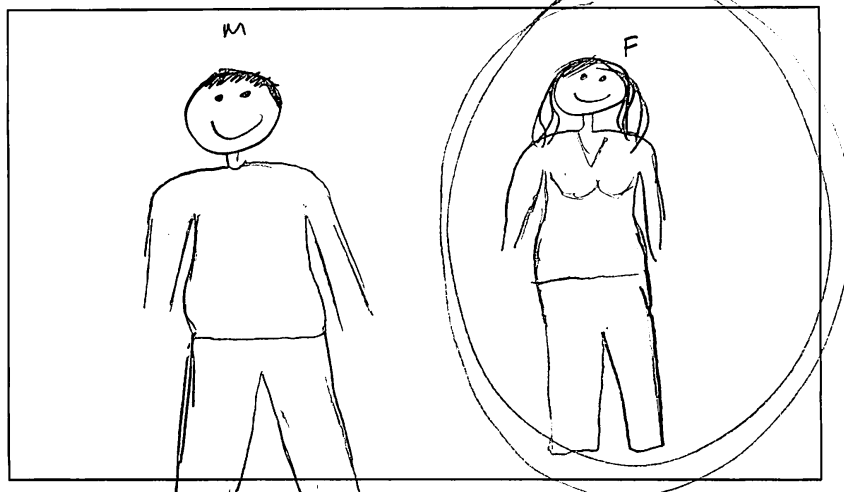


Figure 41

Obese Participant 2:

Katie's Drawing

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



## **Appendix E**

### **Institutional Review Board Approval Letters**

10/28/10

HSCL #18999

Mary Beth Asbury  
COMS  
102 Bailey Hall

The Human Subjects Committee, Lawrence Campus (HSCL) has received your response to its expedited review of your research project

18999 Asbury/Kunkel (COMS) Family Relationships, Stress, Coping, Weight, and Attitudes Toward Fat People

and approved this project under the expedited procedure provided in 45 CFR 46.110 (f) (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Since your research presents no risk to participants and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context HSCL may waive the requirement for a signed consent form (45 CFR 46.117 (c) (2)). Your information statement meets HSCL requirements. The Office for Human Research Protections requires that your information statement must include the note of HSCL approval and expiration date, which has been entered on the form sent back to you with this approval.

1. At designated intervals until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the HSCL office.
2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at [http://www.rcr.ku.edu/hscl/hsp\\_tutorial/000.shtml](http://www.rcr.ku.edu/hscl/hsp_tutorial/000.shtml).
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the Committee immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy

of

the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.

6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform HSCL when this project is terminated. You must also provide HSCL with an annual status report to maintain HSCL approval. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from HSCL one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Jan Butin  
Associate Coordinator  
Human Subjects Committee Lawrence  
cc: Adrienne Kunkel

10/28/10  
HSCL #19001

Mary Beth Asbury  
COMS  
102 Bailey Hall

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence reviewed your research update application for project

19001 Asbury/Kunkel (COMS) Understanding Identity: A Communicative Approach to Weight

Before approval for research can be given, RESPOND IN WRITING (or email: [jbutin@ku.edu](mailto:jbutin@ku.edu)) to the concerns given below, addressing the issues point-by-point. That is, indicate in your response where you address each of the concerns given below. Please use boldface, underline, or some other means to highlight changes if your response includes original text (e.g. changes to consent, etc.). DO NOT BEGIN RESEARCH. DO NOT RESUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION. Please note that you must respond within 90 days or your application will become inactive. **If revisions of forms are asked for, send in one copy of the revised document.** Please refer to the HSCL project number in correspondence regarding this application.

1. In your consent form, you have research credit listed as both a benefit and in the Payment to Participants section. It should not be listed in the Benefits section. These should be actual benefits from the research itself, or, if there aren't any, you can say something along the lines of "While there may be no direct benefits to the individual for participating in the research, the research project will clarify. . . or answer questions about . . ."
2. Will your overweight group of 15 interviewees also contain participants in the obese range? The BMI ranges for overweight and obesity are distinct yet you say in your purpose you will be studying obese women. Please clarify.
3. Would it not be possible to have eating disorders represented in each of your

groups of interviewees? Your application seems to equate eating disorders with the underweight group. Please clarify how you are using the term eating disorder.

You may send your response (revised documents, etc.) by surface mail, email, or FAX (864-5049). Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jan Butin  
HSCL Associate Coordinator  
University of Kansas

cc: Adrienne Kunkel



**Appendix F**  
**Interview Transcripts**

### **Underweight Participant 1: Mandi**

- Interviewer:* I am starting the recording now. This interview is done with participant number 1.3.01. The date is November 30th, 2010, and the location is my office, 117 Bailey Hall. All right, so to start off, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Skinny. I don't know, kind of, like, gangly, or a little bit awkward. Are you looking for, like – just, like general?
- Interviewer:* Like, physical – physical – general physical – so, like, if you were going on a blind date with someone and they were, like – you know, they haven't met you and they're, like, "Well, what do you look like?" like, what would you say?
- Interviewee:* Okay. Really dark hair, big, dark eyes, kind of narrow face. I don't know if I'd say this on a blind date, but, like, bony. Let's see, no curves. Hmm. Sort of dark features, like hair, eyebrow and, like, arm hair-wise. Let's see. I think that's probably about it.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How would you physically describe your friends, in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* Okay. Most of my friends are male, or, like, all of my friends are male, so would that make a difference?
- Interviewer:* Not necessarily, but maybe do male and female, just so that I get \_\_\_\_\_.
- Interviewee:* Let's see. The guys range from – I don't think I have really any skinny guy friends, but just, like, from – I don't know, I hesitate to say normal, but just, like, typical kind of slightly built and short to, like, I don't know, bigger, rounder guys, I guess. My female friends, well, let's see, I don't really have any female friends. Some of the girls I see – or the girls I hang out with, well, I guess just like in relation to me, like, less skinny, I guess. More typical, more, like, curvy and – I don't know. I just have so few, like, female friends, so –
- Interviewer:* Okay, that's fine. When you were younger, did anyone ever comment about your weight?
- Interviewee:* I've been hearing I was skinny and, like, just, like, narrow build my entire life. My mom said I was bony.
- Interviewer:* Mm hmm. So your mom would talk about that, or –

*Interviewee:* Yeah, yeah. Never in, like, really negative ways. Just, like, bony was probably the most negative. And people have always told me to, like, eat more and just, like, inquiring about, like, if I'm unhealthily skinny.

*Interviewer:* Mm hmm.

*Interviewee:* That's more been – I don't know, like, that's really more been in the last several years, though. When I was younger, I don't really know, besides, like, tall and little.

*Interviewer:* How did those comments make you feel?

*Interviewee:* Unfortunately, they do make me feel a little bit special.

*Interviewer:* Special in a good way or special in a bad way?

*Interviewee:* Special in a good way. I don't know, I know it's really unhealthy to feel this way, but, like, when people are concerned about, like, my BMI and stuff. Like, I don't know, I feel, like, comfortable in my body or whatever, except for the lack of curves. That's kind of a problem. But, like, I don't know, it's nice that people are concerned about that. I don't know.

And, like, I know I should be getting that kind of feeling in other more positive ways, but when people are concerned and they're just, like, "You're dangerously skinny," sometimes it's, like – I don't know. Like, it's such – it's so pervasive that you're – that you should be skinny, and so it's, like – and, like, even though I'm, like, all feminist-y and women's studies and stuff, like, it's still, like, yeah, I do conform to, like, that sort of feeling. I don't know. Something kind of to work on, but, you know –

*Interviewer:* Good. So have you ever taken any action regarding these comments?

*Interviewee:* I – not really. Like, I eat a lot. I have, like, a really fast metabolism. I need to eat, like, every three or four hours. Recently, a friend of mine and I were talking about my weight because I had been losing, like, a few more pounds, I think due to, like, caffeine and stress. And so I'm just, like, okay, this is scary. Like, I shouldn't be going too far below.

So, like, he helped me, like, come up with a plan to, like, just eat more, like, fat and, like, eat more – like, eat more frequently, just like the things that they tell you not to do. Like, I'm supposed to, like – like, our plan is to, like, skip breakfast and, like, eat right before bed. You know, just, like, so I can gain weight.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Other than, like, occasionally actually attempting to eat even more than I do, not really – yeah, I don't know. I've never, like – I never exercise or anything, even though I think that would also help me gain, like, muscle weight.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* They eat a lot. Occasionally they go – like, my stepfather is a bigger guy and, like, my mom, after she's had four kids, like, she has – like, she's concerned about her weight. So sometimes they go on diets, but, like, I don't even really notice that, and, like, when it comes to things like a good meal, we are all encouraged – like, especially the kids.

I mean, I'm the oldest of, like – my second youngest is 10, so big age – like, we're all encouraged to, like – you know, if it's good, eat it. Like, you know, eat as much as – as there is, you know? I guess especially – I mean, Thanksgiving was just recently, so I'm thinking about that, but it's just, like, yes, eat. Like, do you like it? Okay, more. You know, take more of it.

*Interviewer:* So were – when – were there any rules about food, like, in your household?

*Interviewee:* Not really. No, no rules. We were encouraged – I was encouraged a lot to, like, eat – not necessarily healthy, but fruit and vegetables. Like, I don't know, from a young age, parents have, like, always, you know, fruit and vegetables are – like, not only are they important, but they taste good. So, like, they do to me, I mean, so, like – 'cause I've always been eating them. So, like, I don't know, I can't really think of anything besides just, like, try to eat fruit, but that's not even a rule.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How does your – how does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Like, what do you mean?

*Interviewer:* Like, you know, were they all at the table, or –

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Were you all scattered, or –

*Interviewee:* No. We – even just being out of the home for two years I forget. But just, like, primarily at the table as a family. Yeah, and, like, even – we didn't really do a lot of fast food, and even when we did, it was still, like, as a family. And, like, restaurants – like, going out to dinner was, like, one of

our main social familial things which we did, like, as a group. Yeah, we always ate together.

*Interviewer:* So what do you all talk about at these meals?

*Interviewee:* Family stuff, my stepdad's work. Since my mom got a job a couple years ago, her work, the kids' school, my school. Just, like, personal stuff. You know, just, like, work and school, family.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* With who? Or in general?

*Interviewer:* Well, that's my next question. So just in general.

*Interviewee:* It depends. When – like, if I get my weight – if I, like, find out, like, how much I weigh and it's, like, significantly lower than 120, I'll, like, talk about it to my mom and to, like, my friends and stuff. And, like, I don't know, it's not really in my consciousness that often, unless I do get my weight checked. But when I do, like, if I'm concerned about it, which I usually am, like, I sort of – like, I'm trying to gain weight, but, like, it's not really even – I mean, I eat a lot, so I don't really know how much I can do. I would say not frequently, but not infrequently.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I don't know. Maybe if I had to quantify it, like, maybe once a week or twice a week, if it's, like, low. And I mean, like, I talk about it in relation to, like – like, I'm dealing with depression and anxiety and stuff, and, like, so when that comes up, like, I think weight ties into those things. And, like, with medications I've taken in the past, like, those have, like – weight has definitely played – been something to that. So – and since I've been dealing with that, like, off and on – well, really on for, like, for awhile, like, that's been – it's just, like, something that's connected to a larger part of who I am, what I'm dealing with.

*Interviewer:* When you – so who would you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* My mom and a couple of my close friends here. I mean, like – I mean, I have a few female friends, but I have – like, I really don't have a lot of friends in general. So with, like, the two best guy friends I have here, I talk about it with them too, because they're – because I know that they're concerned about, like, you know, my overall health, just 'cause we're friends.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* And they – yeah. They all tell me to eat more.

*Interviewer:* What are their general body shapes?

*Interviewee:* My mom is – she’s built – like, we’re built really similar, if you, like, discount her – like, the weight that she, like, gained after – after her kids. Like, she’s really, really tall and really, really skinny. Yeah, she talks about her weight sometimes, as if, like, she’s worried about it or something, which is silly, I think.

Like, I don’t know. I just think, like, worrying about being overweight is just, like, ridiculous. I don’t know, but, like, I guess \_\_\_\_\_. And then my friends, one of them is pretty fit, one of them is rounder. I don’t know. We don’t really talk about their weight ever.

*Interviewer:* Where would you have these types of conversations?

*Interviewee:* With my mom, over the phone usually, ‘cause that’s, like the primary contact I have with her. And then with my friends, you know, we’re just wherever we are. Like, houses or car.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations or do they?

*Interviewee:* I do. I do, almost all the time. My mom does occasionally when it’s, like, in relation to medications or, like, anxiety and stuff. Like, occasionally she will if she knows it’s been, like, a thing. But almost always I do.

*Interviewer:* Could you describe one of the best conversations you’ve had with someone about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, probably – I mean, like, the one that sticks in my mind is the one I had just recently with a friend of mine, like, where, like, he recognized that I was, like, at potential problem, and, like, we just discussed various ways of, like, taking care of it, you know, and just, like, different ways of, like, slowing down my metabolism and so –

*Interviewer:* So what – what made it made you think it was so – was positive?

*Interviewee:* It was nice because, like, he actually seemed concerned for my health, and, like, he affirmed my, like, worries about potential, like, health problems. And, I mean, I don’t even know, like – I mean, objectively, my BMI is underweight occasionally, but, like, other than that, I don’t know that it’s a problem. But it was nice, like, that he, like, took it – like, he took me seriously and he was, like – instead of, you know – like,

occasionally girls – like, the girls I live with will be just, like, “Oh, you’re so skinny. You’re so lucky.”

I’m just, like, yeah, I don’t know about that, like, ‘cause – so, like, that’s not really positive, because, like, they’re just, like, appearance is great, and I’m just, like, I don’t know. Like, I don’t have, like, boobs or, like – like, anything, you know? And, like, I’m – I have to eat all the time. I can’t, like, maintain anything. So those aren’t really affirmative, but, like, when my friend is just, like, yeah, like, okay, let’s fix it. Let’s work on this.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So describe the worst conversation you’ve ever had about your weight.

*Interviewee:* Well, I don’t know. It was bad in a way that it, like, caused my worry. Last semester I – I had a psych class with a really great professor, and he talked about, like, depression some in class, so I’m just, like, oh, okay, these are some new ways of thinking about depression that I haven’t really thought of. So I – we formed, like, a fairly close relationship that semester, and, like, I switched medication, like, under his influence - like, not – not officially or anything through him, but just, like, under recommendation and whatever, like, after running it through my physician and everything.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* But, like, I get – like, it caused me to lose, like – I gained a lot of – I gained, like, 30 or, like, 30 pounds about, like, last year, like, towards the middle of the year, and then, like, with this new medication I went on, like, I lost, like, 20 pounds in, like, three weeks, and, like, that’s not a good thing. And so, like, I don’t know, the professor and I were talking about it and he’s just, like, “How much do you weigh?” and, like, he calculated my BMI, and he’s just like – yeah, I mean, it was the worst because it was frightening ‘cause he’s, like, “If you go much lower, then you could be, like, in a state of just, like, permanent anorexia.”

And I’m just, like, are you kidding me? That’s – ‘cause I’ve never had, like, problems with that before. I’ve never had, like, any sort of eating disorder or anything. I love eating and I do it often and with pleasure, you know? But, yeah, he was just, like, you could possibly go into, like, permanent anorexia, and I was just, like, oh, my God, okay. So that’s – I guess – I don’t know. Like, I’ve been thinking about weight a lot more since last semester.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, yeah. Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not really anyone. There are some people who I wouldn't – like, I just wouldn't talk about it, like my dad or my stepdad. But, like, I don't think it would be uncomfortable. It just doesn't really come up, besides, you know, you're skinny, let's go out to eat.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you identify with people who have, like, the same build as you?

*Interviewee:* Hmm. Well, I haven't really thought about that. My first impulse would be to say not really, because I don't think that necessarily we're the same build for the same reasons. I think, like, people try to get to where I am, whether that's, like, for better or for worse. Like, but, like, I actively – I go against that, you know? Like, I don't exercise and, like, try to, like, try to slow down my – like, my lightning freaking speed metabolism. So I don't know. But that's a really interesting question. I would say no, not really.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are? And speaking, like, to you individually, not, like, to the general –

*Interviewee:* I would have to say it's more important than I wish it was. I identify, like, as a skinny person. Like, being tall and thin, like, that is what I ascribe to as, like, personal traits of mine that are attractive, you know?

So it's, like – and, like, societally acceptable personal traits, like, and I have those. Like, I'm fortunate or unfortunate, whatever. Like, I happen to fit in with what society wants women to look like in that respect. Like, not in – not in all respects, like, but in that particular way.

Yeah, and like I said, it does make me feel, like, special sometimes, so it's somewhat important, I guess. I guess I'd be the same person if I didn't – but, I mean, I've just never been, so I don't know, you know?

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight? So, like, over 10 pounds? You talked about –

*Interviewee:* Yeah, through medication switch I lost, like – I don't remember how much it was, but it was, like – it was definitely over 15 within a really short amount of time, because I just quit eating because of the medication I was on.

*Interviewer:* And that was last year.

*Interviewee:* That was – yeah, that was spring of this year.

*Interviewer:* Okay.



*Interviewee:* So 2010, I guess. I just stopped eating.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Well, I had gained a lot of weight, like, before then, so I did feel – like, I felt different, because I had, like, stretch marks and stuff, which I have – like, I just wasn't used to. Like, I just never, like, experienced this kind of thing. So, like, because I had gained so much, because, like, literally, like I had French fries for dinner, like, a lot. So, I mean, it's not, like, hard to pinpoint.

But, like, I didn't feel good about weighing, like – it sounds ridiculous, but, like, 140. Like, that was ridiculously more than I've ever been, like, used to. I'm sure if it had remained over time it would have been fine, but, like, it didn't because then, like, I switched antidepressants and it just, like, all went away.

Yeah, I don't know, which is weird, 'cause, like, I went – I went back to, like, where I felt I should be, except not really 'cause I was too skinny, but it was, like, where I was used to. I don't know. I did feel, like, big, though. I don't know. It was – or, I don't know, not big, but just, like, different.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. How did you feel after you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I felt back to normal, but worried that it would go too far. That, like, it would send my brain into, like, permanent anorexia or whatever he said, which is just terrifying, 'cause, like, I don't want to stop eating. Yeah, I don't know. It was complicated, I guess, how I felt.

*Interviewer:* So you talked about your mom and how she's pretty much the same build, but has maybe put on a few pounds since having four children.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean, 'cause she had twins, like, eight years ago. So, I mean, naturally.

*Interviewer:* So what does the rest of your family look like?

*Interviewee:* Well, I don't – we don't talk to any of my mom's family anymore, and my dad was adopted. So I don't really have much family. My stepdad's family, though, like, who we spend most of our time with – my stepdad is a really big guy, really tall, so my siblings are gonna be, like – well, they're pretty young right now, but they're, like, gonna be tall of just, like, moderate build, you know?

My sister looks a lot like me, as far as she's really tall and she's really skinny, but she's also, like, Filipino like my stepdad, so she's just, like,

beautiful, which is unfair, but that's okay. I don't know. His family is, like, I would say, like, a kind of typical family, where, like, some guys – like, some of them are a little bit skinnier than others, some of the women are a little bit heavier than others, but they've had kids, you know?

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Not as really – not, like – besides my mom and stepdad's occasional diets and my, like, sometimes frightening skinniness, no, not really. One of my brothers is, like, a little bit pudgier, and, like, that's kind of talked about, not really as a bad thing. Not as a bad thing, just, like, noted, you know, 'cause, like, they're fraternal twins. One of them is skinnier, one of them is bigger. So, like, I don't know, it's kind of mentioned, but we don't want him to be insecure about that. Like, my parents, like, actively do – like, don't want any kind of insecurity about that sort of thing, so it's not really brought up.

*Interviewer:* So is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* My stepdad might – he's not obese. He might – like, he's overweight, I guess, like, but he's so tall that it's hard to tell, you know? Like, he's such a big guy. Yeah, but he's a big guy, like, both tall and, like, he's got, like, a belly and stuff. But other than that, no one, no one.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about him?

*Interviewee:* Diets. Occasionally, but, I mean, not really. It's definitely – I don't know, and I guess he's lucky because he is so tall that it's not, like, unbecoming. Like, it just, like, my stepdad is big.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It's just – you know, he's really tall and just, like, big guy.

*Interviewer:* Is he treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* No. He's kind of, like – well, no. I mean, he's worried about, like, diabetes, kind of, because his – like, his dad has, like, type – like, not the weight kind.

*Interviewer:* Type 1?

*Interviewee:* Type 1, yeah. So, like, his dad has that, so he's, like, I know, like, they're kind of worried about, like, him developing, I don't know, whatever – the other one, I guess. I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Type 2, mm hmm.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* Mm mm.

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* Besides me.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Have you ever been self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not self-conscious negatively.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I mean, I'm aware – I'm very aware, like, 'cause people tell me, you know?

*Interviewer:* Mm hmm. Can you describe a situation in which you were very aware of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Recently. I was in a bathroom at my house, and I live with other girls in \_\_\_\_\_, and one of them is – like, we were getting ready for bed and she's, like, "Oh, you're so skinny," and, like, and this was at a point where, like, I had just gotten weighed and, like, I was 116, and I'm, like, that's not good. So I was just kind of, like, you know – I was, like, "Yeah, I am," and I looked at myself more, just, like, lifted up my shirt. Just, like, yeah, I was very aware.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* And she's, like, "Oh, you're so lucky. I don't eat very much and I exercise and I'm still," – and, like, she's – people talk about this stuff, and, like, they're not – I just don't understand. I just don't see that. But, like, she's just, like, "Oh, I'm so big." No. That's ridiculous. I mean, you – your body suits you. Like –

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action after that – after what – the situation?

*Interviewee:* No. no, I just – like, when I gained weight, I just kept eating the way I did and, like, when I lost weight, I – fortunately, I stopped taking that medication and I switched to one that, like, gave me my appetite back. But that wasn't – like, the switch was due to several things, though. Like, my appetite was lower and then my mood went crazy. So, like, no, nothing specifically weight ever.

*Interviewer:* So kind of switching gears here, are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* This is interesting. I mean, I read about this stuff all the time, 'cause, like, this is what I'm interested in, but I don't really apply it to myself. Not really, because I have always been friends with guys, so, like, I don't know. And I feel like on this campus I am – it's, like, that's not an issue, my personal experience. No.

Well, except, like, I guess in high school, my two best friends were gay guys, so, like, they would always – they were just, like, oh, girls are gross and stuff, and, like, boobs are gross, and, like, that would make me feel kind of bad, 'cause I'm just, like, whatever. It's just a body. Like, you don't want it, don't touch it. That's fine. I don't know, but that one made me kind of, like, just feel weird sometimes. But I don't know, that was, like, a really specialized case, I guess.

*Interviewer:* All right, thanks.

*[End of Audio]*

## Underweight Participant 2: Susan

- Interviewer:* Okay. I'm starting the recording now. This is participant identification number 1.3.10 and the date is February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is 117 Bailey. All right. So first, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I'm pretty thin, just naturally thin. I've always kind of been that way. It just runs in my family.
- Interviewer:* If you were describing yourself to like, a blind date, and said like, "This is how you'll know me." Like, how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I'd probably say that I have kind of longer, blond hair and average height. Then I'd usually probably say what I'd be wearing. I wouldn't probably include, like, I'm thin. I probably wouldn't say anything like that.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* It really varies. Most of – well, a lot of my friends from high school are kind of more athletic sort of, so like, of probably like, my best friends from high school they did a lot of sports, so they're not small, you know? And then in college, most of my good friends are from where I live, so it really just spans everything. But a lot of them go to the rec and the ones who are more overweight are right now trying to like, get thinner.
- Interviewer:* Okay. In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* What have they said?
- Interviewee:* I used to – not so much anymore, but I used to be skinnier and people would, you know, like try to tell – be like, "Are you eating?" And kind of like to try to, I don't know – save me or something but, I didn't have any eating disorders or anything so there wasn't really anything to do. But yeah, and I've had people talk to my parents before.
- Interviewer:* Oh, really?
- Interviewee:* Yeah, like behind my back, be like, "Are you watching her? Are you watching what she eats?" And then they get really mad.
- Interviewer:* So, like who would say these things?

*Interviewee:* I've had – mostly – well, the people who would like, talk to my parents, those would be probably like my parents' friends and so you know, like people older than me. But I've had you know, a few people more around my age, but usually it's people who are older than me or more in like, positions of authority.

*Interviewer:* How did it make you feel when they would say these things?

*Interviewee:* I mean, I wasn't like super offended, but it was just kind of like, I always – I always looked at it, as like, you wouldn't go to someone and be like, "You really need to like, watch your daughter's weight. She's looking kind of fat today." So like, I don't know. I thought it was rude mostly, I guess, that someone would think that they knew what was going on in someone else's life kind of.

*Interviewer:* Right. Did you take any action after you had heard these comments?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* Just brushed it off kind of, you know?

*Interviewer:* How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* We love food. We – my – always, my family has made a big effort – we eat dinner together every night. We, you know – we – it's you know, home-cooked food. It's – and also like, my mom would always be really – she was like really into gourmet food, and so she was very like, "Butter's a good thing." Like, you know, like, "Fat is a good thing." You can't always have good food without, you know, some fat or some butter.

*Interviewer:* So, were there any rules about food in your house?

*Interviewee:* No. I mean, now there's more because the – I'm the oldest of – well, kind of six – two of them are stepsiblings. But they like – if they had no rules, they'd just eat candy and sweets and stuff all day, so like, they have rules about like, asking for snacks and asking for food. But when it was just more like me and my brother and when we were younger, we didn't really – I don't remember having any rules like that and definitely not when I got older.

*Interviewer:* Like, are your younger siblings like, are they about the same size as you, like?

*Interviewee:* Mhmm. Yeah, they're all – they're all pretty small.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, okay. What would you all talk about at your family dinners?

*Interviewee:* We talked about – I mean, mostly just like really normal stuff since we did it every day. It was just like, “How was your day?” And everyone would talk about their day and I mean, we would just talk about random things, too, just whatever comes up.

*Interviewer:* That’s good. How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I try to avoid it ‘cause I live in – mostly because I’m usually in my hall – my girl’s scholarship hall and people get really mad sometimes – you know, like it’s just a hard thing especially because so many girls are, you know, going to the rec every day and trying to eat right, but I just, at this point – I know that some day it’s going to catch up with me – but I just – I don’t exercise really, I don’t want what I eat. I just kind of do whatever and it works out at this point. And I’m sure I’m gonna hit getting middle age and be like, “Oh my god! I need to work out or something!”

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] So, do you talk about your weight with anyone?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What is the best conversation you’ve had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Hmm. Probably either, like, maybe with my mom when I was younger, like, kind of about those things of like – like people saying something to my parents or something and her being like, “No, it’s fine, you’re beautiful.” Blah blah well – that kind of thing. What moms say. Or like, maybe with my boyfriend and just because sometimes I’ll like – I am just like, a very sarcastic kind of like person, so we just all like make comments of like, “Well, back in, you know, the day, I was viewed as like, ugly and I would have died because I was, you know, skinny and didn’t have the weight.” And he’ll just – he’s just very ice about it and is like, “No, you’re beautiful.” And all of that kind of thing, so.

*Interviewer:* What is the worst conversation you’ve ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I once had a friend in junior high – so this would have been maybe – I think this was ninth grade when we were doing this ‘cause in Lawrence it goes seventh through ninth – but – and she was doing like, a speech for our English class about eating disorders. And she was like, “Can I interview you?” And I was like, “I don’t really have anything to say about it, so I guess, no.”

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* I'd probably, like be comfortable talking to anyone. I just don't do it. I don't think it's a very you know, interesting or like socially – like not socially acceptable but socially good – I don't even know how to put it – like, topic to talk about, really.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you identify with people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Probably like, on a very superficial extent just because like, you know, you look through your magazine and it's like, if you look like this, this is what you should wear. And I'm like, "We look good in the same thing." You know, it's like kind of like, on a more superficial level, but I mean, I don't see someone and I'm like, "You should be my friend because we look similar." Like, not – I'm not that way.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I mean, I guess it sounds kind of dumb, but kind of important just – once again, though, more on a superficial level, just 'cause I think since other people – I've always - like, who I've known for a long time have always identified me as like, being very thin. It like kind of – like, I don't know. It reflects back like kind of, from me because that's what they think.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* If that makes any sense.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a significant amount of weight, like over a certain pounds?

*Interviewee:* Once when I got the stomach flu, like a couple years ago. I lost like ten pounds and so that was a pretty big deal, but never anything else like that.

*Interviewer:* So, how'd you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Before? I felt fine. And – yeah – and then afterwards I was just like, "Oh my god, I need to like, eat something. I feel" – just it was – uh – it was gross.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Well, most of my – especially in like, my actual family – I have a step mom. But like, we – like, everyone on my mom – me, and my dad's side are pretty like, relatively thin people. I don't really have like, even extended family that's overweight. And but like, my mom, for a while – she had four kids and so then like, you're – there's no way you're thin



after four kids. And so, she like, kind of struggled with her weight for a while and she was like – I mean, I don't know. I was like, ten, so I don't know, but probably, technically, overweight at least.

And she – but she ended up doing the Atkins diet when it was like super big. And like, it worked for her and everyone's always like, "It's such a scam, don't do it. Like, that's so unhealthy." But like, she like followed the program and lost the weight, and then like healthily again. And she did a lot running. And so I think that was a lot of too, was because she was like – like she picked up running when she was doing that.

*Interviewer:* Good. So, is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Not a lot, really.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. Possibly one of the little kids, but they're just little and running around, so.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not really, at this point. I gained a little bit of weight over the past year and so I don't really one way or the other feel anything about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And then, just kind of switching gears here. Are there situations in which you feel like your gender as a female is important?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I do. I think that like – and especially because I've been doing a lot of like – I'm in like, an anthology class and yeah, we're doing all this stuff with that. And like, I just think that it's – I mean, I guess maybe not necessarily as important, but I think that in our society it is important. And that like, you're expected to you know, kind of like use your femininity in a certain way. And I wouldn't say that like I don't do – like, I do that sometimes, you know, just like use – I think we're expected to do that in our society and that I'm not like, adverse to using that to my advantage.

*Interviewer:* And like, in what situations would you use that?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I think kind of – I'll think of a good situation. Well, just like, kind of on all spectrums, like for – it's just in different ways. It manifests itself in different ways. Like, if you're going into an interview, I think you're expected to you know, look nice and look, you know, like

business like but like, you know, with a - in a feminine way. I don't know. I think if you look too austere people, like you know – I think people have kind of this image of like the powerful businesswoman kind of at this point, but like, where you know, it's not like a masculine power. It's a more feminine power.

And then also, like, I mean, just since, you know, I'm in college – when you go to a party, you're kind of expected to, you know, play that role of whatever. I don't even know what it is, but like.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Underweight Participant 3: Kara**

- Interviewer:* Starting the recording now. Participant identification number is 1.3.05. The date is December 3rd, 2010, and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. Okay.
- Interviewee:* Do you want me to hold it?
- Interviewer:* No. It's fine. First question, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Tall. I would say pretty healthy. I exercise regularly, but I wouldn't say too thin or too heavy or anything like that.
- Interviewer:* So if you were going on a blind date and someone was like, "Tell me how I'll know you in the coffee shop.", how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* Definitely tall. I stand out, that's for sure. Thin – I mean, my hair probably is a big part of it, having red hair. That would probably be it. Pale-ish, or Irish looking.
- Interviewer:* All right. How would you physically describe your closest friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* I think they're all about average. They're all shorter than I am, but weight wise I would say definitely average.
- Interviewer:* In your past has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* People ask me why I'm so thin, and make assumptions, but it's really because I ran cross country in high school. I think that was a big reason why I'm just thin. It's not like I purposely was trying to be this skinny.
- Interviewer:* Who are people that say these things to you?
- Interviewee:* My mom has asked me before, not like in a mean way. She's just like, "Are you okay?" I mean, that's more out of concern, but close friends will joke about it. I don't think they realize I just like to work out.
- Interviewer:* How does it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* It's fine if they say it once in a while, but sometimes it will get a little \_\_\_\_, like in the summer if I'm wearing tank tops or something like that. They're like, "Oh. You could use a burger." I don't know. I'm just like, it gets kind of annoying.
- Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action regarding these comments?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I usually just laugh it off. I'm not too self-conscious about it. I mean, it gets annoying when people say it a lot, but I just am kind of like, whatever.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* I think they're fine. We eat pretty healthy. We eat really healthy. My mom's a nurse so she kind of makes sure that we eat organic. I don't think we eat like too much, or too little, or anything like that.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* Not really, not that I – no.

*Interviewer:* So you could kind of eat whenever?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Usually right before dinner my mom's like, "Don't eat anything so you're not too full." But other than that, it's kind of like, whenever.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* You mean like what do we have, or how much do we eat?

*Interviewer:* No, like do you eat together? Do you eat separately?

*Interviewee:* We usually eat together, I mean, dinner. Otherwise breakfast and lunch, our schedules are too hectic to really have time to eat together. Dinner, relatively together.

*Interviewer:* What do you talk about?

*Interviewee:* Just about our day, or things in the future, like if a holiday is coming up, what we're doing for that. My parents will ask our opinions on vacations, where we want to go, stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not really that much unless I'm at the doctor, or something like this, but I don't really talk about it other than that.

*Interviewer:* The main people you talk about your weight with are doctors?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably with one of my friends on cross country. Some people lose weight during cross country. Some people gain muscle weight. I've stayed pretty consistent because I'll usually lose fat but gain muscle. It ends up evening out. It's usually just about how cross country affects my weight.

*Interviewer:* What's one of the worst conversations you've had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* My one friend who's totally average would always talk about how fat she is, and she's not at all. She always says that, and she jokes about the freshman 15, and it's always really awkward because she's like, "You look the same." I don't really know what to say to that.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably boys. I just think it's like an awkward conversation to have with them.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with people who are similarly built as you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I know two girls on my cross country team who are probably about my height and weight, and they're twins. Us three kind of got – people give us stuff like that, so at least with them I can relate to what people say to them.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I think it's pretty important. I just like to stay healthy I guess, so I wouldn't necessarily want to be overweight because that would \_\_\_\_, but I wouldn't want to be underweight because that can just lead to so many health problems. I'd like to stay where I'm at right now because I just feel better about myself. I'm at a point where I'm very happy with how I look.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a significant amount of weight, like more than 10 pounds?

*Interviewee:* Probably not. I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family? Like, is it important?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think it's pretty important. My dad travels for work, and he's probably average for a 6'4, 50 year old man, but I mean, he doesn't really work out as much as the rest of us do just because he's always working. I think we're pretty healthy.

*Interviewer:* Do you talk about weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* With my mom once in a while just because she's a nurse, and that's why I think she worries. If we look too thin, or anything like that, she'll usually just ask if we're okay and things like that. I know if you lose a significant amount of weight it can be from diabetes, so I think that's a red flag to her if we look too thin.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* I think my grandma, but that would probably be it.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about her regarding her weight?

*Interviewee:* It's my mom's mom, so she's always on her about what she eats, and how she should exercise a little bit more. She's pretty young for a grandma, so my mom wants her to stick around for a while.

*Interviewer:* Is she treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* Not really, no.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Probably not. Well my brother is in 8th grade, and he's just really tall for his age. He's so thin, so I guess by looking at him you might think that, but I don't think that he's really grown fully yet. He's grown up, and not really out.

*Interviewer:* It'll catch up. *[Laughter]* Is anything said to him about that?

*Interviewee:* No. My parents usually just feed him more meat, but he's still so skinny. I don't even know.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I have been in the past, just whenever people do make comments, or if I read a magazine. I love *Seventeen* magazine, or *Cosmo*, but I don't know. Just seeing those pictures, and reading certain articles, you just wonder. Even if you're perfectly average weight, you just can't help but wonder.

*Interviewer:* I think there is a cricket in my office, driving me nuts.

*Interviewee:* Do you ever do anything, take any action regarding your weight after reading those?

*Interviewer:* Sometimes it makes me want to work out more. Sometimes I'll just be like, "Now I have to go to the health club today and do abs or something like that."

*Interviewer:* Kind of switching gears here. Is there ever a situation in which you're kind of self-conscious about your gender as a female? Like you walk in to a situation, and you're like, "Wow. I'm really aware that I'm a female here."

*Interviewee:* Sometimes if I'm in just like an all-guy environment. I work at a pool, and sometimes when I'm put on break with all boys, it's really weird. Some of them are my friends, but it's just awkward because they would talk about totally different things than I do.

*Interviewer:* All right.

*[End of Audio]*

#### **Underweight Participant 4: Jennifer's**

- Interviewer:* Okay. You can speak normally – it will pick it up. Starting the interview now. This is participant identification number 1 dot 3 dot 10. And the date is February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is 117 Bailey. Okay, so first question. How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Physically, I would say that I would be pretty skinny, not too skinny, just average looking. I'm pretty average all around – height, light – I mean, height-wise, too.
- Interviewer:* So if you were going on, like, a blind date, and you were like, here's how you'll know me at the restaurant. Like, how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* In that situation, I would probably just give them like, an item of clothing, so I mean, like, the color I was wearing, but probably like by my hair or something – long, black hair.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* Honestly, I don't really pay attention to that, I mean, that's not what I look at for when – for my friendships, but for the most part, they're all pretty average too. No one's really that, you know.
- Interviewer:* So about – are they about the same size as you or?
- Interviewee:* I mean, kind of. My like, close – I'm thinking of like, my closet friends. They – I mean, she has like a totally different body type as me, but I would say that I'm pretty, like, petite compared to my friends but not in way that I'm like, you know. I don't want to be like, bragging.
- Interviewer:* Right. *[Laughter]* In the past, has anyone ever commented on your weight?
- Interviewee:* Just positively or negatively? I've always gotten compliments, I guess, saying that I was like, skinny and "I wish I could be that skinny" and stuff like that. But nothing too – the word I'm looking for – nothing that really stands out more specifically.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How's your family around food?
- Interviewee:* My family – we love food. I absolutely love food. My mom, like won't – she won't buy me like new clothes, but if there's something I want to eat, no matter how expensive it is, she'll pay for it. Yeah, we've always been like that.



*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* Nope.

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* Just eat it. All. As much as you want.

*Interviewer:* How's your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* I grew up mostly with my mom, and so my mom and I would either eat or if I would like, go out with friends and stuff, but for the most part –

*Interviewer:* Eat together?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I would say generally, if I was home.

*Interviewer:* What would you discuss?

*Interviewee:* Mostly, just like what happened in our day and stuff. And if it got more in depth than it would but it wouldn't be like, a deep thing every time. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* My weight? Not very often. Every once in a while, but I feel like that's pretty normal.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Either my mom or like, my roommates or my close friends.

*Interviewer:* And what are the general body shapes of those people?

*Interviewee:* Well, the same as my friends. My mom is – she's like really short, but I mean, she's kind of got a little bit of weight on her, but not –

*Interviewer:* So, pretty average, you 'd say?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I don't really know anyone who's like really overweight. Not that that's a defining factor of my friends –

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* The best? You mean, just in general? I mean, obviously it's nice to like, be compliments or to say – like my mom always tells me, she's like, if I ever complain about me – she's always like, "You look fine just the way you are." Like, "you don't need to gain any weight or you don't need to lose anymore, but if you do then it's okay." I've never been really criticized about – I've been blessed in that way, I guess.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* The only one I can think off the top of my head is when people haven't seen me in a long time and they say that I've gained weight, and I don't think I have. And so it's like, in my mind that's not really an issue and I don't hear that very often, but when I do, I'm kind of like, "Oh, okay." But.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* No one.

*Interviewer:* No one. Do you identify with people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I mean, in a sense, I guess. I don't really –

*Interviewer:* And how important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Not very.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a significant amount of weight?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm. Nope.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* All of my cousins are about the same as me, like, we're all pretty of the same, general size. And then all of my aunts, have like, they're kind of chubby just like with the baby weight that never kind of came off. But we'll – what is that?

*Interviewer:* Yeah, they're doing construction downstairs so my office shakes like every five minutes. So. *[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Yeah, everyone's pretty average.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* No. Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Like I said earlier, like every so often, I'll be like, oh, I feel like I've put on a few pounds or something, but never to the point where I'm actually upset about it for a long period of time.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is there like, particular situations in which you feel that way?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* Just when I ate a lot at the end of the day I'm like, oh crap.

*Interviewer:* And just kind of switching gears now, are there situations in which your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 1: Phyllis**

- Interviewer:* Okay, this is participant number 1.1.20. The date is November 30th, 2010, and the location is my office in 117 Bailey Hall. Okay. So we're gonna start of just kind of talking about you see yourself. So, like, how would you describe yourself physically to someone?
- Interviewee:* I'm kind of short. I'm kind of small, but I guess you would just say an average weight.
- Interviewer:* Okay. So if you were, let's say, like, going on a blind date with someone and you just kind of talked on the phone, like, would you pretty much describe yourself the same way or would you change anything, or –
- Interviewee:* I would probably definitely still say that I'm short, because I am. I'm pretty short. But probably the same description.
- Interviewer:* All right. How would you describe – physically describe your friends that you hang out with the most?
- Interviewee:* They're generally around my size. I mean, I have a few friends that are bigger and I have friends that are smaller, so – but I'd say they're all usually my size.
- Interviewer:* Your size, okay. All right. All right, so when you were younger, which could be, like, teenage years or when you were little or whatever, did anyone ever comment about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yeah, I'd definitely say probably more in elementary school I was kind of a chub, so I think people probably definitely commented on my weight in elementary school and maybe beginning of junior high.
- Interviewer:* What was – what were some of the things that were said, if you can remember?
- Interviewee:* I don't remember that much about it. I mean, I'm sure someone just made a comment one time that I was fat or chubby or overweight or something like that. Not sure the terms you would use in elementary school, but –
- Interviewer:* Yeah. Can you, like, recall a specific situation in which someone said something?
- Interviewee:* Not really. I just remember that it had happened before, but not anything serious.

*Interviewer:* So who maybe said those comments? Like, was it a family member, was it peers?

*Interviewee:* I think it was just kids at school, yeah, girls or boys. I don't think it really mattered, but definitely kids at school.

*Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?

*Interviewee:* I mean, not happy. I was, like, oh, sad, but it wasn't a big deal. I guess it wasn't a constant thing, so it was okay.

*Interviewer:* All right. So, like, when you heard those comments, did you change any of your behaviors or anything after that, or –

*Interviewee:* Not really. It didn't really affect me. I mean, if I did change, it was on my own doing.

*Interviewer:* All right. So how is your family around food? So, I mean, does your family have, like, any rules about food? Like, you know, you can't eat at certain times or stay away from certain types of foods, or –

*Interviewee:* I mean, we just have strict time of when, like, meals are. Like, we're not supposed to snack a lot during the day when I lived at home. But it – we didn't have, like, a strict diet. We didn't eat super fatty foods, but we didn't – we couldn't not eat desserts or fried foods.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay. How did your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* My mom usually made, like, a fruit or vegetable with our dinner. She usually made dinner every night. We didn't go out very much. And that was about the meal she made every day, and for lunch or breakfast you were pretty much on your own.

*Interviewer:* So did you – did you, like, sit at the table and have family dinners, or what were you –

*Interviewee:* We tried to sit at the table once a week, all of us, but otherwise it was kind of come when you are ready, and if not, get it in the fridge.

*Interviewer:* So when you had these – these, like, once a week things, like, what did you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* Generally they were pretty quiet dinners. Usually the once a week dinner was with my stepdad, 'cause he couldn't usually eat with us. So I'd say my little sisters talked a lot with him, but I wasn't really in the conversation. I just kind of ate my food.

*Interviewer:* As that was the purpose.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* So how often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* It's not a huge concern of mine and it doesn't overwhelm my life like a lot of people's, I would say. But every so often, just once in awhile.

*Interviewer:* So who would you talk about it with?

*Interviewee:* Either, like, my older sister or my roommate.

*Interviewer:* And are they about the same size as you or are they –

*Interviewee:* My roommate is about the same size as me, and my sister is a little bigger than me.

*Interviewer:* And so where do you have these conversations? Like, are they out, are they in, or –

*Interviewee:* Typically, like, in, like, our room, with my roommate, or in my room at home with my sister.

*Interviewer:* Mm hmm. So do you initiate these conversations or do they primarily –

*Interviewee:* They just kind of come up. I don't –

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I probably wouldn't bring them up, usually.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe, like, what was the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I guess, like, this – well, it's happened several times, 'cause my weight fluctuates a lot. I'd say this past summer, my mom said that I lost weight and I was, like, oh, thanks. It just kind of caught me off guard. But –

*Interviewer:* Yeah, those are always good comments.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, but – yeah.

*Interviewer:* Describe the worst conversation you ever had about your weight.

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I didn't really have conversations about my weight that were bad. I've discussed with my sister how she's been unhappy with her weight, but not really anything about myself.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I mean, it's not something I would just talk about in a normal, everyday conversation. But it's okay to talk about, I guess, if someone brought it up.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, yeah. Do you identify with other people – with other people of your shape? So –

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't say, like, I'm only, like, drawn to people of my size, because I do have friends that are bigger, smaller. So it doesn't – I don't really have a preference, I guess I would say.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How important is your weight to who you are? And this is just, like, talking specifically to you, like, not to – in general. Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. It's not terribly important. I don't – I'm not – if I'm overweight or underweight, that's not a huge issue to me. But –

*Interviewer:* Good. Have you ever lost weight? So, like, anything over 10 pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. In my chubbier stages in elementary school, I was, like, fourth grade, I lost, like, 20 pounds, and that's when I got smaller, I guess.

*Interviewer:* Did you do it intentionally or was it –

*Interviewee:* I don't think it was originally intentionally, but then once I saw I had lost, like, 10 pounds, oh, this feels good, so I think I just –

*Interviewer:* Yeah, keep going.

*Interviewee:* Started to eat better, I guess.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So how did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I think 'cause I was younger, I really did not care. It wasn't – it's never been an issue to me.

*Interviewer:* Was there anything that made you decide – I think you already addressed this. You just kind of happened, like –

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I had gained some weight back again late junior high and maybe early high school, and then this past summer I just said to myself, I think I should lose weight, so I decided I was gonna do that.

*Interviewer:* And how do you feel after?

*Interviewee:* Good. I'm happy with my weight and I feel healthy, which was the most important thing to me. So as long as I feel healthy, then I'm okay with the weight.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So how would you describe the weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* My mom's pretty small. My dad is kind of stockier, so I think that's where I got that from. I was bigger built, I'd say. And my sister is a little stockier like my dad. And my younger sisters are all pretty skinny.

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Only really with my older sister, 'cause she seems more consumed with it than anyone else. My mom tries to watch her figure, she says, but that's about it. My mom and my sister, I guess.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* My sister is overweight, my older sister. And my Nana's overweight, but no one's obese. I think that's it.

*Interviewer:* Does anyone talk about them and their weight?

*Interviewee:* My mom's said something about my Nana before, because she for her health just needed to lose some weight. But it wasn't, like, negative. It was just looking out for her, I would guess.

*Interviewer:* Mm hmm. Are they treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* Nope. They're all treated the same.

*Interviewer:* Good deal. Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* I would say my younger sister probably is underweight. She's pretty skinny, maybe not intentionally.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about her?

*Interviewee:* No. We all say how skinny she is sometimes and comment on her perfect, toned figure. But that's about it.



*Interviewer:* Is she treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* I'd say I've felt self-conscious a few times, but I usually get over it pretty quick. Maybe the first five minutes I put on an outfit, I'm not sure, but then –

*Interviewer:* So is – so could you just describe a situation where you would feel self-conscious?

*Interviewee:* Actually, this year me and my roommate and a friend of ours in our house decided we were gonna paint our stomachs for the U game, and one of the – the other girl, not my roommate, is really skinny, very, very flat stomach, and I was a little self-conscious because my stomach isn't that flat. So it was a little – little different for me, so –

*Interviewer:* So did anyone say anything? I mean, just kind of what made you feel that way? Was it –

*Interviewee:* I think it was just myself. No one said anything. They comment – everyone commented that we all looked fine, but, I mean, it was just kind of in myself, I think.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Did you take any action after that situation?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* All right. All right, so kind of switching gears here, is there a – are there situations in which your gender as a female is more important to you than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. I mean, kind of being a female is kind of sometimes looked down upon anyway, so I don't necessarily identify with that as much as maybe other parts.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right. Okay. All right.  
*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 2: Kristine**

*Interviewer:* All right. I'm starting the recording now. This is Kristine. The date is December 6th, 2010, and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First question is how would you describe yourself physically?

*Interviewee:* I would say that I'm pretty normal except for I like to dress weird.

*Interviewer:* Okay. If you were describing yourself to a blind date saying, "How would you know me?", what would you say?

*Interviewee:* I would say that I have fake blonde hair, and that I have weird piercings on my ear, and I would probably be the one standing in a corner.

*Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?

*Interviewee:* I would say that I'm probably smaller than most of my friends. I do have one friend that's really, really big.

*Interviewer:* In your past has anyone ever made a comment about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* And what was said?

*Interviewee:* That I'm way too skinny, and I look anorexic, or just stupid people at my work saying, "Oh, look at all that fat on your back." Okay.

*Interviewer:* Who would say these things? You said people at work.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, and my mom, and other people.

*Interviewer:* How did that make you feel?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I just kind of shrugged it off.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action regarding those comments?

*Interviewee:* No. I was on Adderall, and when I started taking it, that's when I lost probably 15 pounds, so maybe if anything I quit taking my Adderall as much, and made myself eat.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* We're all right. We kind of just fend for ourselves.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Do you eat family dinners or things like that?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes. My mom's really busy.

*Interviewer:* What would you talk about when you had family dinners?

*Interviewee:* Just school and about our days.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* When I go to the doctor's office.

*Interviewer:* Is that primarily who you talk to your weight about, with your doctor?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I would say probably when I first lost those 15 pounds and I was like, "Yeah. I'm so small. I can wear size 3." My managers at work were just telling me how small I was and it made me feel good.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I really can't think of anything. The only thing is last night when that girl at work told me I was getting fat because I just \_\_\_ cheese.

*Interviewer:* Oh no. Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Not very.

*Interviewer:* You said you've lost like 15 pounds one time. When was that?

*Interviewee:* It was probably about four months ago, and I've gained 10 of it back.

*Interviewer:* It was because of the Adderall?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost your weight?

*Interviewee:* I felt I was kind of chunky and didn't look good in most outfits.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* I felt great, then I just stopped caring. Had too much \_\_\_\_ lately.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family? Is it important?

*Interviewee:* It's not really important because most of my family is pretty heavy-set.

*Interviewer:* Is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* No. We just look at people for who they are.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family considered overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* My mom was, and this was probably when I was like seven or something. I was a horrible kid and always called her fat.

*Interviewer:* Oh no.

*Interviewee:* I remembered that last week, like I was so mean to my mom. I think she was almost 250 once and she dropped back down. She did Slim Fast and everything.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* My aunt, but that's probably because of drugs. She's starting to get out of that now.

*Interviewer:* Good. Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I would say sometimes, but not usually.

*Interviewer:* What's a situation when you would be self-conscious?

*Interviewee:* When I go swimming obviously. I'm pretty sure every girl feels like that.

*Interviewer:* Do you take any action afterwards?

*Interviewee:* No. I'm really lazy. I never work out or do anything. I've been in a relationship for two years, don't care what I look like anymore.

*Interviewer:* Oh good. *[Laughter]* Kind of switching gears here. Are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other aspects of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* What would those situations be like?

*Interviewee:* I'm very weak because I don't work out, and so I'll make guys move heavy stuff for me.

*Interviewer:* All right.

*Interviewee:* I take that to my advantage a lot.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 3: Amber**

- Interviewer:* Alright, I'm starting the recording now. This is participant number 1.1.09. The date is December 1, 2010 and the location is my office, 117 Bailey Hall. Okay. So first, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Average.
- Interviewer:* Okay.
- Interviewee:* A little skinny, but not too thin.
- Interviewer:* If you were to go on a blind date and they called you and said well how will I know it's you. What would you say your description was like?
- Interviewee:* Short, chin length, dirty blonde hair. My actual height?
- Interviewer:* No, you – yeah, just –
- Interviewee:* Medium height. Fair to tan skin. And I don't know, thin medium.
- Interviewee:* Alright. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* Average.
- Interviewer:* Average? Are they more on the thin side or more on the –
- Interviewee:* I mean I've a couple that are more on the thin side. I've one that's really, really thin. There's one that's maybe a little on the bigger side and then I would just say average.
- Interviewer:* When you were younger, did anyone ever comment on your weight?
- Interviewee:* My family always said my twin sister and I were too skinny. And sometimes my friends would say that I was too skinny.
- Interviewer:* How did that make you feel?
- Interviewee:* Bad. Kind of mad.
- Interviewer:* Did you take any action, like after you heard these comments regarding it?
- Interviewee:* No.
- Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* They eat a lot. We're Italian so we eat more than necessary every time.

*Interviewer:* Oh! *[Laughter]* Is your mom a really good cook?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah? What's your favorite thing to eat?

*Interviewee:* Pasta.

*Interviewer:* Really? Like any kind of pasta or –

*Interviewee:* Just like red sauce pasta.

*Interviewer:* You know, me too! That's like the classic.

*Interviewee:* It's always the best.

*Interviewer:* Did your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* Clean your plate. Couldn't leave until I was done.

*Interviewer:* Really?

*Interviewee:* Oh yeah.

*Interviewer:* Do you have to like wipe up the sauce with bread?

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Pretty much.

*Interviewer:* How did your family typically eat their meals? So were they – were you at the table or were you like all scattered around the house?

*Interviewee:* Almost always we were eating at the table. But now that all of us are pretty much grown up we don't really – we only do that on Sundays.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So, you had family dinners and things like that.

*Interviewee:* Uh hum. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What would you discuss when you're eating with your family?

*Interviewee:* School. How our day went. I don't know – my mom and dad would just talk about random stuff and we just sit there eating.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Occasionally. Not too frequently.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about it with?

*Interviewee:* Mostly my boyfriend.

*Interviewer:* And how's his body shape? Like, how would you describe it?

*Interviewee:* Well since he's gone off to college, he's gained a little weight. But he's just average.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Usually in my apartment.

*Interviewer:* And do you usually initiate them or does he?

*Interviewee:* Well, he's pretty self-conscious about his body weight, too, so a lot of times he'll bring it up.

*Interviewer:* Describe one of the best conversations you had about your weight.

*Interviewee:* I don't know. Maybe with my mom? We were just saying how I don't need to change.

*Interviewer:* Oh, that's good. That's real good.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. And my boyfriend, too.

*Interviewer:* What's one of the worst conversations?

*Interviewee:* Probably with my – one of my really good friends. She just – it was a long time ago. She just said I was disgustingly skinny. But I was a lot skinnier then.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably my older sister because she's very outspoken and she would probably just get mad if I said anything about my weight.

*Interviewer:* Why would she be mad?



*Interviewee:* Because I shouldn't be worrying about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Do you identify with other people who are your body shape?

*Interviewee:* Uh hum.

*Interviewer:* Yes. And how important is your weight to who you are? Like you as an individual.

*Interviewee:* I don't think it's important.

*Interviewer:* Not important? Have you ever lost a large amount of weight? Like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How much did you lose?

*Interviewee:* I really don't remember. It was probably like ten pounds.

*Interviewer:* Okay. When did you do that?

*Interviewee:* Let's see. I think I was 15.

*Interviewer:* And why did you lose it?

*Interviewee:* I was just very – I just didn't eat a lot because I was very self-conscious about my weight.

*Interviewer:* Oh really?

*Interviewee:* Uh hum. It was just a short period of time.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel when you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I felt good.

*Interviewer:* And you just decided to lose it? This was a conscious choice?

*Interviewee:* Uh hum.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* Good.

*Interviewer:* Didn't we just ask that? How did you feel before you lost it? Sorry!

*Interviewee:* Oh! Just self-conscious.

*Interviewer:* Like what was going on that was making you feel self-conscious?

*Interviewee:* Really nothing. I just felt I had to fit into this skinny body I imagine. I don't really know why I did that.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family? Like, is it an important factor?

*Interviewee:* No, it's not important.

*Interviewer:* No. Is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* My brother. His weight fluctuates a lot. Like he'll be skinny and then he will just burst. He'll just like – I don't know if it has to do with his depression?

*Interviewer:* Is anything like said to him about his weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. That he needs to eat healthier. Not like bringing him down or anything.

*Interviewer:* Right. Is he treated differently?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family under weight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Is anything – okay so never mind. *[Laughter]* Are you self-conscious about your weight now?

*Interviewee:* Uh huh.

*Interviewer:* No? And then kind of switching gears for a second. Is there ever a situation in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of who you are? You know, so are there situations in which you're really aware that you're a female?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I mean I guess in some situations.

*Interviewer:* Like what would those situations be?

*Interviewee:* Like at a job setting or something. I don't know. Or even just like in the family – like, if there are certain things that the girls do.

*Interviewer:* Okay, that's it.

*[End of Audio]*

#### **Average weight Participant 4: Gini**

- Interviewer:* Okay. I'm starting the recording now. Participant identification number is 1.1.08. The date is December 3rd, 2010, and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. All right. So start off. How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I wouldn't say overweight, but I would say there's definitely a lot of things I don't like about my weight.
- Interviewer:* What don't you like?
- Interviewee:* I just feel like I'm chubby. I don't have a flat stomach. I'm constantly looking at my midsection area, but I wouldn't say I'm overweight, but I would say I'm not at the weight I want to be.
- Interviewer:* Okay. If you had a blind date, and the person was calling you on the phone, and said, "How am I going to know this is you at the restaurant?", how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I would describe myself as short, blonde. I'd probably explain what I was going to be wearing.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* Skinny.
- Interviewer:* Are they about the same size as you?
- Interviewee:* They're taller and skinnier, thinner.
- Interviewer:* When you were younger, or just in your past, in general, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yeah, my dad.
- Interviewer:* Oh no. What happened? What did he say?
- Interviewee:* I don't think he did it in a mean manner or anything, but he would always comment and make jokes about gaining weight, like, "Oh, you look like you're gaining weight." Or like how big my butt was, just joking, but I don't think he realized.
- Interviewer:* So it didn't make you feel – how did it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* Not very good.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action when you heard those comments?

*Interviewee:* No. Not too much in high school I didn't really, but I never really – I think in high school I didn't really start to focus on my weight until senior year, because I used to play a lot of sports.

*Interviewer:* What did you play?

*Interviewee:* I played soccer, so in high school I never really thought I was overweight really, but then after I stopped playing soccer, then I started to notice weight gain and stuff like that, because it's pretty much just constant, but afterwards I started to notice weight gain and stuff like that. I was already working out while I was playing sports, so I didn't really work out extra, then I didn't even start realizing that I needed to work out until I got in to college.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* Horrible.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* My mom's family – because my parents are divorced, so my mom, they buy all frozen food. They don't really watch the food that they eat or anything. I'd say they eat more than they probably should, and my dad – I wouldn't say he eats more than he should, but he definitely doesn't eat good stuff, like potato chips, and pop, and stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food, like you can't eat at a certain time, or you can't eat certain things?

*Interviewee:* No. We do whatever we want.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* *[Laughter]* Nope.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals, like were you together? Were you all over the house?

*Interviewee:* No. We weren't ever together. We never sat at the dinner table and ate dinner together. We were all pretty much on different schedules, so it was just when I got home from school I'd eat something, when my dad got home from work, he'd eat something. If I was hungry later on, I'd eat something. It was just sporadic.

*Interviewer:* Did you ever have family dinners?

*Interviewee:* No, not really. I mean, at my mom's house I wouldn't really call it a family dinner. If my mom makes dinner we'll all sit in front of the TV and watch TV as we eat, but at my dad's house we never really – I mean I guess occasionally if I made dinner I'd be like, "Let's sit at the table and eat." If we weren't making dinner, we'd just eat on our own time.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not so much to my friends, but to my boyfriend, every day I'll say something.

*Interviewer:* Like what will you say?

*Interviewee:* I'll just be like, "Oh, I'm gaining weight." or "Look at my stomach. It's so fat."

*Interviewer:* Oh no.

*Interviewee:* [Laughter] Whenever he goes to pick me up, I'll be like, "Don't pick me up. I'm too heavy to lift."

*Interviewer:* Your boyfriend, what's his body shape?

*Interviewee:* He's thin. He's muscular. He's taller. Not really tall for a guy, but he's taller than I am, probably 5'10, and thin, muscle. He never gains weight.

*Interviewer:* Oh. One of those. [Laughter]

*Interviewee:* Yeah. He thinks he has. I'm like, "You look exactly the same."

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] Where do you have these conversations with him?

*Interviewee:* We live together, so at home, usually when I'm getting ready in the morning, or like I said, if he goes to pick me up or something. Or we're watching TV and I'll say a comment about \_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Do you primarily initiate these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I'd say whenever – last year I was working out, like four or five days a week. I was eating really good. This was when my boyfriend was deployed over seas, so I guess I just felt like I didn't really have anyone to look good for, but I just automatically would work out every day. People would start to notice I was losing weight, so.

*Interviewer:* So it was people commenting that you had lost weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, and that I looked good, or I looked skinny.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. They all kind of blend together.

*Interviewer:* Think of one.

*Interviewee:* Like I said earlier, I pretty much always initiate the conversations. They usually go just where I'm looking at myself in the mirror and noticing weight gain, then I just get upset about it and start talking to my boyfriend about it. He's like, "No, you're not." I'm like, "Yeah, I am."

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* My friends.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Interviewee:* Because they're all skinny.

*Interviewer:* Good reason. Do you identify with people who are your shape?

*Interviewee:* I don't really know. I always look at people and I say, "I wonder if that's what I look like." But I don't really know what I look like because I look at myself in the mirror and see one thing, but then other people tell me something else, so when I look at someone who is particularly the same shape as I am, like, shorter, I always think, "Is that what I look like? Do I look stubby? Do I have big legs like that?"

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are as a person?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I wouldn't say it's important to who I am as a person, but I would say I focus on it a lot. Almost every aspect of my life, there's some way that it relates back to my body I think.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a significant amount of weight, like over 10 pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. When I was a freshman in college I wasn't really working out on a regular basis, but I was taking diet pills, and I lost 13 pounds in a month.

*Interviewer:* Wow.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, and actually – well I think I was taking diet pills and I actually had an anxiety attack from taking them.

*Interviewer:* Oh really.

*Interviewee:* But I just switched to a different kind. Then from the second one I started taking, I lost 13 pounds from that one.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I did get comments about, "Gee. You lost a lot of weight in a short amount of time." I thought it was like, a good thing. My mom was worried about me too, because when she was my age she was anorexic, so she made comments, but I was like, "No. I'm fine." I still ate. It's not like I didn't eat, but I did eat significantly less amounts because the diet pills actually suppressed my appetite.

*Interviewer:* Why did you decide to lose the weight and take the diet pills?

*Interviewee:* Just the same thing that I still do, look at myself in pictures, and comparing myself to other people. It's like the same thing as I do now, but now I know that it's not healthy to take diet pills, so I don't do it anymore. I was working out a lot but since I've just had a busy schedule and things like that, I don't have as much time to work out. I've been gaining weight again, but usually whenever I start to gain weight, then I'll get on this exercising binge where I exercise a whole lot, and I eat all of this healthy food. Then it just runs in to time consumption. I'll run in to a time period during school where it's really busy and I have all this stuff to get done. Then I just stop working out for a while, then I obsess about my weight, then I'll start that cycle over again.

*Interviewer:* You said you compare yourself to other people a lot of times. In your family, when they would comment about your weight and things like that, would they ever compare you to other people?

*Interviewee:* No, not really. They wouldn't really compare me to other people; just make comments.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost the weight?

*Interviewee:* Bad. *[Laughter]* I didn't feel very good about myself.



*Interviewer:* How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* Great, awesome. I felt like I was getting more attention. I felt like people looked at me more, like thought I was prettier. Before I lost weight I felt like any time someone was looking at me, they'd be like – like they were thinking what I was thinking.

*Interviewer:* Which was?

*Interviewee:* I'm chubby. I need to lose weight.

*Interviewer:* In your family, is weight an important factor?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* So is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Not obese. I would say my mom is a little overweight. I wouldn't say she was obese or anything like that.

*Interviewer:* Does she talk about it or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* No. She doesn't talk about it. I don't talk about her being overweight, but I talk to her about how she should exercise more, not just to lose weight, but to be more healthy. She's always complaining about being tired and stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* Is anybody in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* When are you really self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* When the most do I notice it?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* Usually when I'm getting dressed, or depending on what I'm wearing that day. If it's something a little bit tighter, I feel like people notice more my weight. It's mostly in the morning when I'm getting dressed though, when I feel like, "Man, I can't fit in to my clothes. My jeans are too tight."

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after that?

*Interviewee:* By what I eat?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I would say I have problems with that because I like food, *[laughter]* and I like to – not like to – when I get stressed or upset about something I turn to food, but whenever I notice my weight, or my weight starts upsetting me or something, I'll be like, "Man. Today I just need to eat healthy. I need to eat this and that." Sometimes that happens, and sometimes it doesn't. I'll be like getting dressed for school, and be like, "I need to work out today. I need to do this today."

*Interviewer:* Kind of switching gears here, kind of a similar way. Are there ever situations in which you're self-conscious about the fact that you're a female, like that there are situations that you walk in to and you're like, "I'm really aware that I'm a girl here."?

*Interviewee:* Like that has to do with weight?

*Interviewer:* No. Just in general.

*Interviewee:* I'd say living with my boyfriend there's a lot of times I think that, especially with the whole weight thing, I kind of notice my weight more, and how I obsess about stuff like that, and how I obsess about my appearance. Guys don't really do that as much. Then just times of the month where I'm more hormonal and stuff like that, or when I'm like really stressed out and I'll start crying. My boyfriend will be like, "Why are you crying?" I'm like, "I don't know." He's like, "I don't get it." I'm like, "You don't."

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### Average weight Participant 5: Gala

*Interviewer:* I am starting the recording now. The participant number is one dot one dot zero five. The date is December 1, 2010 and the location is 117 Bay Leaf. Okay, so how would you describe yourself physically?

*Interviewee:* I think normal. I don't consider myself overweight but I don't consider myself the ideal weight that I would like to be.

*Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?

*Interviewee:* I would say they're normal, too. I'd say I have a few friends that you would consider overweight as well. But I don't have any friends that are super skinny or look like they might have a problem or anything like that.

*Interviewer:* When you were younger, did anyone ever comment about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Mostly I can remember – well my dad or my brother, I guess. They're just really into playing sports and I was the cheerleader girl. And I remember times when my dad would be like oh you've got to watch your weight and stuff like that. And then last year I lost a whole bunch of weight and I was pretty skinny.

*Interviewer:* How much did you lose?

*Interviewee:* I was maybe ten pounds heavier than I am now and so I was about 130 then and I got down to like 100.

*Interviewer:* Oh my gosh! That's a lot.

*Interviewee:* And then for the second time in my life people had started commenting on my weight.

*Interviewer:* Why did you lose the 30 pounds?

*Interviewee:* I guess – well that was after my freshman year and freshman –

*[Cross Talk]*

*Interviewer:* Oh yeah, uh hum.

*Interviewee:* And they call – maybe it was more than 15, I don't know. And my room mate at the end of the year, we weren't getting along and she ended up telling me I was fat. And then I kind of started getting into working out and then I came to school and I've had a history with like depression and

stuff and I kind of hit a brick wall. Like I dropped all my classes and I had a lot of spare time, so I just started working out a lot and it became kind of addicting.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* And then I obviously – like I was restricting what I was eating. I lost a lot of weight then and people would comment and just feel like you're so skinny or – I'd hear those kinds of comments then. That's really the only times in my life that I remember people saying something. I feel like they say something either when maybe getting over the top or you're too little. It's never oh, you look good the way you are.

*Interviewer:* Well how does it make you feel when people comment about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I mean I guess it depends what kind of compliment it is. But no matter what kind of compliment it is, whether I'm getting big or too small, it still makes you think about exercise, what you're eating, and stuff. And so it still brings those kinds of feelings about – whether they're good like oh, well \_\_\_\_\_ looking skinny so I can have that dessert tonight, or okay, I can't have that dessert tonight. Could be positive or negative, depending on the situation.

*Interviewer:* So, have you taken action regarding those comments? Like when people would say watch your weight, did you try to lose weight or –

*Interviewee:* I would say yeah, I would try but it wasn't very successful. I mean I was still in high school and had other things to think about then going and exercising. And I was young then and you feel –

*[Cross Talk]*

*Interviewee:* -will never catch up to you so I didn't really pay attention to it much or anything. Me and my friends would go and do classes at the YMCA sometimes, but it was nothing like deliberately.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* They eat whatever they want, like whenever they want pretty much. My parents, they aren't like physically fit but they're not like – I don't think they're considered obese. They're maybe overweight. But my mom's gone on some diets before and she's lost quite a bit of weight but she's just so stress out with work and me and my brother that she just doesn't really think about that much anymore. So my family just eats whatever they want to eat and I'm kind of like, oh I wish I could do that.

*Interviewer:* Don't we all? Does your family ever have rules about food?

*Interviewee:* No. I've never had any. I remember when I was little and staying at one of my friend's house sometimes and if we wanted to eat we'd have to go ask her mom. And I thought that was the weirdest thing. Like why would you have to ask your parents to eat? My parents were never like you can only eat this and this and this. Like, our kitchen was always open. And if I would go fix something at a random time they wouldn't say anything.

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewee:* But yeah, my friend's parents. One of them were like – I thought that was kind of strange.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals? So are you together or –

*Interviewee:* Well, when I was young, I'd say kindergarten to maybe like sixth grade, my grandparents lived with us and they took care of me and my brother so we didn't have to go to daycare and stuff. And my grandma would cook dinner every night, so we'd have a family dinner just about every night. And then once they moved out, me and my brother were able to take care of ourselves and my parents were working late, and it just kind of became that if dinner was fixed we'd all get it and we'd sit down at the TV and eat it, or we'd all go our separate ways, or we'd just do our own thing for dinner.

*Interviewer:* What did you all talk about when you had family dinners?

*Interviewee:* You know, I can't say this is for sure. I feel like we just talked about our days, stuff that was going on in our lives. The most I can remember is sitting there and they'd always force me to eat everything on my plate and I didn't like fish back then, so I'd sit there for like a good couple of hours –

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Yeah, that's all I can really recall. And I always had to be – I always had to clean the dishes off the table and put them in the dishwasher after dinner. That was my job.

*Interviewer:* How often do you discuss your weight?

*Interviewee:* I'd say a lot. I think it's more then I problem should. It's usually always on my mind, I guess you could say.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably I'd say my friends.

*Interviewer:* And they're about the same size as you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, my room mate my best friends I live with. They're – they weigh more than me but like they look completely fine. Like their body types just fit and works for them.

*Interviewer:* And so do you have like these conversations around the apartment?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate them or do they?

*Interviewee:* I'd say it's a little bit of both.

*Interviewer:* What's one of the best conversations you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't know – this is so dumb, but there's this guy at my high school. He plays baseball here at KU, actually. And he was like this big, he was like the hot shot, everyone liked him and whatnot, and it was after – it was last year New Year's Eve, so early beginning of this year when I just lost all my weight and I'd seen him on New Year's Eve and then hadn't seen him for awhile. And he gave me a big hug and he was like oh my gosh you look so great! He was like what happened? And I don't know why, but that just sticks out. I mean he would say hey and we were friends before, but he was just really like cordial and open to me that night, and I was like hmmm.

*Interviewer:* What's one of the worst conversations you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I would say my room mate's dad. Sometimes I go home with her to Topeka and this was when I was pretty skinny and like he always says I need to eat more and how he wants to feed me and stuff like that. I just like – you know, no. I don't like people openly discuss this kind of thing.

*Interviewer:* So obviously your room mate's dad, but who else are you not comfortable talking about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I can't say I'm uncomfortable with anyone really, like I'll talk to my mom on the phone and I'll be like yeah I feel really fat right now, like nothing's fitting right, like – or even my dad. I don't really feel uncomfortable about it with many people.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with people who are like your size?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. I mean I think I look past that. I'd say for some reason I tend to hang around people my same size but I don't think I intentionally rule anyone out because of it.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* It's really a huge part to me. And I hate to say it but it is. I was never that concerned with it until like I said, about a year ago. It became like a huge focal point in my life.

*Interviewer:* So you said you lost a lot of weight? How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I felt like I was bigger and I felt like there was nothing I could really do to change it. And like I had a boyfriend at the time so I was like well, he likes me, I don't have anyone else to impress. But then he broke up with me and then my room mate called me fat and I think that was – and then with all the other problems I've had with my past with depression and stuff, I just felt the wheels turning onto a whole new kind of obsession.

*Interviewer:* So how do you feel – so how did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* After? I felt really good, like I liked the way I looked. And I wanted to go shopping all the time. I could fit into anything I want. And I could fit in my prom dress from high school again and that was pretty cool. Yeah, I can't think of a negative feeling that I felt.

*Interviewer:* Good. How would you describe weight – rate weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* As in like importance?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Is it important?

*Interviewee:* I don't really think it's a big issue in my family a lot. I'd say me and my brother are probably the only people in my family that are average weight. I'd say everyone else is a little above average, so yeah, I mean it's not really that important.

*Interviewer:* Do you all talk about it?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* So you probably characterize like your mom and dad and maybe some siblings as being overweight, right?

*Interviewee:* Uh hum.

*Interviewer:* So, does anyone talk about them or anything because of their size?

*Interviewee:* No, I've never heard anyone talk about them because of their size.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Uh huh.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious of your weight now?

*Interviewee:* Uh huh.

*Interviewer:* When was a situation that you felt really self-conscious?

*Interviewee:* It was probably – it was just the other week. I put one of my bigger pairs of jeans on and they still were like kind of tight. And a shirt that I'd gotten that always looked good on me but I just looked in the mirror and it just didn't look the same. And then I went out with my friends that night and I was looking at the pictures from that night and I just really – you could just tell I did not fit in those clothes anymore and I was just kind of – it was kind of upsetting I guess.

*Interviewer:* Did you do anything after that?

*Interviewee:* I decided I am going to go on a diet. And this is probably -

*[Cross talk]*

*Interviewer:* Bad diet.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, so that's kind of like in progress. And then I got sick and it's like I don't have energy to go work out and I just kind of like eat, so it's kind of still in progress.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Okay, so now like switching gears. Are there ever situations in which you're self-conscious of the face that you're female? Like is there a situation which you're like really aware that I'm a female here.

*Interviewee:* I can't really say so. I mean maybe – I guess maybe when I'm out at the bars or something. Just like re-emphasize that I am a female just because there's guys everywhere being creepy and you know, that kind of thing. I guess that's the way that I'd feel it the most, that it dawns on me the most.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Alright.



*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 6: Wendy**

- Interviewer:* Okay. Then, starting the recording now. The participant identification is - number is 1.1.220. The date is February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is 117 Bailey Hall. Okay. So, first question. How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I'd say I'm decent. I'm pretty in shape. I'm not toned, I guess I'd say, but in shape.
- Interviewer:* So if you were describing yourself to like, a blind date, and they said, "How would I know you?" What would you say?
- Interviewee:* I'd say that I was pretty tiny, average height. I've got blond hair with straight across bangs, blue eyes, probably have a smile on my face.
- Interviewer:* How would you describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* I'd say they're all relatively the same size as me – pretty in shape. We all like to work out together. Yeah, so that's about it. Some that are a little different, whether that be really skinny or a little bit bigger.
- Interviewer:* Yeah. In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Like, you mean just like, said something straight – like, randomly?
- Interviewer:* Yeah. Or, yeah.
- Interviewee:* Not really. I mean, we're girls, so we all talk about it like, pretty fluently, like, "Oh my gosh I need to lose weight" or something like that. But not anything like randomly like anything about it.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How's your family around food?
- Interviewee:* We like to eat it. We love food. We love it a lot.
- Interviewer:* Do you have any rules about food, like you can't eat certain foods or after certain times?
- Interviewee:* Not really. I mean, when I was little, when we were younger, it was more so like, you know, eat all your fruits and vegetables, but for the most part, we can pretty much eat whatever we want, whenever we want, especially now that we're in college and stuff.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How's your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Breakfast is in the car, wherever you can get it. Lunch is whether it's at school or wherever. But every night we always sit down for dinner and eat it together.

*Interviewer:* So, what would you all talk about when you eat together?

*Interviewee:* Whatever we did that day, or whatever we're going – dealing with, I guess just talk about anything in general, pretty much.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* With my family?

*Interviewer:* With anyone.

*Interviewee:* Or just in general? My roommate and I talk about it all day – or a lot – because we're, you know, getting ready for spring break. But I mean, other than that with anyone else, not really. Not too much.

*Interviewer:* So, is she about the same size as you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* And you talk about these in your room or?

*Interviewee:* Or like, in the cafeteria.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations or do they – or does she?

*Interviewee:* Both.

*Interviewer:* Both.

*Interviewee:* Pretty – pretty even.

*Interviewer:* What's the best conversation you ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably when someone told me I looked good and I was like, "Really?" 'Cause I didn't think so. It's probably sometimes just getting a compliment.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* This is still dealing with weight, right?

*Interviewer:* Mhmm.

*Interviewee:* I don't really know.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I mean, no one's really ever said anything to me that would make me like, say anything. So I don't know. Probably not too much.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* I honestly don't think so. Pretty open about that.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Mhmm.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I'd say probably pretty important. I mean, I'm a college student, yeah, just I guess something we all deal with in our lives.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost like, a significant amount of weight, like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* No. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* It's pretty important. My sister's really health conscious. And my little sister is just now starting to because she's in – she just got into high school. So, but I mean, not really. My parents exercise and they eat good, kind of. That's a lie. We don't eat very good at all.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* I try to, they don't.

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Around my older sister it is and yeah, actually, you know, it really is. We give my dad a hard time about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anyone overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Not really – my dad's got a little bit of a belly but that's about it. But I mean, it's not that big.

*Interviewer:* And that's what you give him the hard time?

*Interviewee:* Oh yeah. When he starts snacking on the donuts.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Dad, you just went for a bike ride?

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* I'd say my younger – my older sister probably is just – I mean, just that's how I would think when I look at her. I think she's a little bit too skinny. My younger sister is only because she got sick, but I mean she's eating a lot more so she's getting back to health, because she can just start eating again.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about them?

*Interviewee:* My cousins – yeah. We all notice that they're kind of really skinny.

*Interviewer:* Are they treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Mhmm.

*Interviewer:* When - describe a situation in which you're self-conscious about your weight.

*Interviewee:* Probably like, when I'm around, like, in a bathing suit or like just around – if I'm like wearing a tight shirt around other people who are really skinny – or just in a tight shirt. Not really – it not really – doesn't depend on who I'm with, it kind of depends on what I'm wearing, I guess I'd say.

*Interviewer:* And then switching gears, is there ever a situation in which you feel your gender or your identity as a female is like, more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Probably, yeah. I probably couldn't give you a specific example like right off the top of my head, but yeah, I would assume so.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 7: Julie**

- Interviewer:* Starting the recording now. The participant identification number is 1.1.98. The date is February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is 117 Bailey. So first, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I guess I think that I'm reasonably good to look at.
- Interviewer:* Okay.
- Interviewee:* But, I have a lot of insecurities about the weight of my thighs in specific and the little pooch at everyone has. So definitely some weight issues.
- Interviewer:* So, if you were describing yourself to a blind date and said, "This is how you'll know me." Like, what would you say?
- Interviewee:* Probably that I've got kind of crazy reddish-blond hair. I kind of like that as an identifier.
- Interviewer:* Well, good.
- Interviewee:* But, yeah.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How would you describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* I don't think any of them are fat but I don't really think that they're healthy.
- Interviewer:* Okay.
- Interviewee:* And it's kind of a big thing to me. I'm not even sure if I'm as healthy as I would like to be.
- Interviewer:* So, would you say they're like, average or?
- Interviewee:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* Okay. In the past, has anyone ever commented on your weight?
- Interviewee:* In junior high there was a girl who was really mean to me about weight, braces, and all sorts of physical traits 'cause I was in cheerleading. So, there's definitely another cheerleader who always said I was like, too heavy and too big.
- Interviewer:* How did that make you feel?

*Interviewee:* At the time, I kind of walked past it but I realized, like, earlier this year that it's like stuck with me ever since then. The like – cheerleaders gave me a makeover, and until that point I didn't feel good about myself at all. And that's kind of like stuck with me. I don't like that it's stuck with me.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any actions after these comments?

*Interviewee:* Not specifically after them.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* Well, my dad's diabetic. So, we always eat at a certain time and he always has to have it just right for him or he won't eat it. My mom is frequently complaining about being overweight, but she doesn't really do anything about it. She's really busy but she doesn't do anything specifically for her weight. And then my brother is – he used to be a little bit tubby because he just sits around and eats chips and plays videogames like a teenage brother does. But now he's actually doing a lot of soccer and weight training, so he's like taken a lot of pro-active steps for health.

*Interviewer:* Oh my gosh.

*Interviewee:* It's kind of cool. It's the closest to an earthquake we'll ever get in Kansas.

*Interviewer:* So, how's your family around food? Like, do they have certain rules about food? Like, you can't eat at a certain times or you can't eat certain things?

*Interviewee:* When I was younger, there were a lot of rules. You couldn't eat anything after dinner. You could have one kind of dessert every night, which seemed a little bit, like, too much. And one pop a day. That kind of stuff.

*Interviewer:* How's your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* We used to all sit at the table, like, together, at my dad's dinner time, but once I started getting into high school and my brother started getting busy, we had to all eat in our separate rooms.

*Interviewer:* What would you discuss when you ate together?

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't really discuss anything 'cause my family and me don't get along that well. But they usually talked about television shows and pop culture type stuff.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?



*Interviewee:* I talk about it with my boyfriend a lot. I don't talk about it with my family at all. But I talk about it with my boyfriend specifically in terms of I don't feel healthy. I feel like if I'm healthy I would look a certain way, so I can't possibly be healthy.

*Interviewer:* So, what is your boyfriend's general shape?

*Interviewee:* He's really average, too. And I think we're very comparable. He's good to look at but he has a little extra on the stomach, the same pooch as me – a little bit muscular so he's got more muscles than me. But yeah, he's pretty average.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* In our apartment.

*Interviewer:* And do you initiate them or does he?

*Interviewee:* It's kind of a toss up. We're both similarly insecure about it.

*Interviewer:* Mhmm. What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't know if I could even think of a great conversation about weight. Yeah, I don't know if I can think of a specific stand out, good conversation.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What's the worst?

*Interviewee:* Probably junior high.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* When the stupid cheerleader. Ah.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* I'm not really comfortable talking about my weight in front of my family, my mom or my dad specifically.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Interviewee:* Well, they're both kind of overweight so if I ever bring up any of my own concerns, it's kind of just – they blow me off. "Oh, you're so thin." And, "You don't even have to worry about it." I mean, everybody has to worry about it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you identify with people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I think so.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Pretty important.

*Interviewer:* Pretty important. Have you ever lost a large amount of weight, like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How much did you lose?

*Interviewee:* Probably 10 to 15.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And when was this?

*Interviewee:* In high school I was diagnosed with depression and that was kind of part of it.

*Interviewer:* So did you purposely lose it or did it just kind of –

*Interviewee:* It just kind of fell off. I wasn't sleeping and that shouldn't help – but I wasn't sleeping and I wasn't eating, so.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Miserable.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. And after?

*Interviewee:* A little bit more like I was controlling my life. I felt more in control but again, it wasn't a conscious weight loss regimen or anything.

*Interviewer:* Right. How would you describe – so, you mentioned your parents are kind of overweight. So they talk about weight a lot in your family?

*Interviewee:* My mom kind of acknowledges that she's overweight and ever once in a while she'll be like, "Oh, I'm gonna eat a salad because I'm overweight." But, that's pretty much the extent of it. My dad does his health stuff and he exercises every night, but he's still kind of overweight – blame that on the diabetes or whatever.

*Interviewer:* So, is anyone else overweight?

*Interviewee:* I mean, I have – I’ve had friends that were overweight, but no one in my specific family.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* I definitely had a couple of friends that were scary. I’ve had friends that suffered from eating disorders and what not.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe a situation in which you’d be self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Any time I go out. Like, any time I feel the need to like, dress up because I’m gonna be doing something, I get really self-conscious, especially about my legs, so.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay. Is it just the act of dressing up or?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, it’s getting yourself presentable to go do something special and you don’t feel like you’re that special. You’re not special enough for that activity.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after those situations?

*Interviewee:* I mean, sometimes it affects what I eat that night or if I exercise that week. But I have a tendency, overall, to just kind of sit and like, dwell, not really take action.

*Interviewer:* Oh my gosh. It was quiet all morning. I don’t know why they do this in the afternoons. Okay. So just switching gears here, are there ever situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important? So, when are you self-conscious of your gender?

*Interviewee:* I don’t know if I’m specifically self-conscious about my gender. I feel it plays a really important role in my life, but I mean, maybe in – my two best friends are boys and then one of which is my boyfriend, so I’m with them the majority of the time. And I guess sometimes I can feel a little bit inferior intelligence wise ‘cause they’re both extremely smart.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 8: Erin**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. The participant identification number is 1.1.96. The date is February 23, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Like how my shape is?
- Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.
- Interviewee:* I think it's normal and highest level of normal.
- Interviewer:* Okay. If you were meeting someone for the first time and they said, "How would I know you? What do you look like?" What would you say?
- Interviewee:* Excuse me, I didn't understand you.
- Interviewer:* If you were meeting someone – say you just met them on the phone or something and they said, "Let's meet in person" and you said, "How will I know what you look like?" What would you say?
- Interviewee:* It's hard to describe it. Like I told you, approximately average weight. It's supposed to be increasing or to be an overweight a bit.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* Sometimes I describe someone as very thin or small as good and when the body shape is very good and the weight – kind of it's a fat body – all of that is going to be normal or overweight.
- Interviewer:* So are your friends the same size as you or are they bigger than you or smaller than you?
- Interviewee:* Approximately they are near my size, except even when I was younger, I'm always the tallest of my friends.
- Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yes. I went through a stage that my weight increased – I reached 78 kilos – that was horrible for me, but it was for like two years, but then I controlled and returned to normal.
- Interviewer:* Did anyone say anything?
- Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What did they say?

*Interviewee:* Even my family – my father – go, "You look fat" and thing.

*Interviewer:* How did that make you feel?

*Interviewee:* Unsatisfied with myself. Since then, I'm always afraid of my weight. I'm trying to control – I'm trying to be lower, but no way – especially when I got pregnant, my weight is increasing and increased very, very much over the normal, so that in the last months, all my concentration wasn't to the delivery. It was hard to lose my weight after the birth of my baby.

*Interviewer:* What did you have?

*Interviewee:* Excuse me?

*Interviewer:* Was your baby a girl or a boy?

*Interviewee:* It's a girl. I continued for like the first six months with a good diet, - \_\_\_\_\_ approximately.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. When you said in your past when you were at 78 kilos and people were saying things to you, did you try to lose weight when people would say things to you?

*Interviewee:* Yes. Even people who didn't say \_\_\_\_\_. I looked at the mirror and I was seeing clothes and all the fashion is for very fit models – even overweight or normal ones – that's why.

*Interviewer:* How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* You mean like eating too much or –

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you have any rules about food – like you can't eat after a certain time or you can only eat at these times?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, we have some things like this because my father's a little bit strict and there's a certain time you have to take the breakfast, you have to take the lunch, and you have to take the dinner, and the snacks – even the snacks we take together.

*Interviewer:* Oh, really?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. This is when I was with my family. When I got married, it's a little bit different.

*Interviewer:* What would you all talk about when you ate together?

*Interviewee:* Anything which is at the time – anything in the news.

*Interviewer:* Do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I always don't like to speak about my weight with anyone.

*Interviewer:* Okay. No one?

*Interviewee:* No. Especially when the gestation was over – I don't like to speak about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* It was when I reached my perfect weight – to be like 62 kilos. It was a perfect time because I felt satisfied and more confident.

*Interviewer:* Like what did people say?

*Interviewee:* "You look so fit."

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had?

*Interviewee:* "Your face is very fat." When my weight increases, it goes right to my face. They look at me when I feel that I am fat.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* You mean a certain person or certain characters of the person?

*Interviewer:* Certain people.

*Interviewee:* Usually people who make fun of you. I don't like those. I have in my family – my cousin is obese, but I do like him very much.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people the same shape as you?

*Interviewee:* You mean like I choose them?

*Interviewer:* Yeah or you feel like you have a lot in common?

*Interviewee:* No, because approximately all of – like in my country, they are average like me or more thin than me.

*Interviewer:* Right. How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I think it's very important. It gives me the confidence when it is the ideal weight.

*Interviewer:* So you said that you lost like a significant amount of weight. Why did you chose to lose it?

*Interviewee:* As I told you, I want to reach the fit and wear different clothes and it was the stage when I entered the university – you know there's a stage that is very sensitive and you want to look more fit these days.

*Interviewer:* All right. How would you describe weight in your family? Is it important?

*Interviewee:* Yes, very important.

*Interviewer:* So does your family talk about weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, because my mother's very fit and my father's always saying that she's an ideal and all of us should be like her. And my husband too, now. He and his family – all of them are approximately in the fit weight, so he sees me now like \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* You said you have a cousin who's obese. Is anyone else in your family?

*Interviewee:* No, only one, I think, in all my family and friends.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about her?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I have people who are speaking about her. How is she doing? How is she? Going for a visit or going even to public places for shopping – I remember that one day in shopping, because we don't have many obese, there's exceptions – in a big store, I remember a child who saw her and started shouting and made all the people in the store look at her. It was a very bad situation.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No, I don't think so. The lowest one is like 55 kilos.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Self?

*Interviewer:* Self-conscious, so are there times when you're more aware of your weight than other times?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What would be a situation?

*Interviewee:* I think I told you – it was when I was pregnant. This is the most aware situation because if I didn't control that after delivery, I wouldn't lose it anymore. They told me, especially my mother, "If you didn't control your weight after delivery, you will keep on increasing."

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So did your family play a big part in making you think about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* All right. So now, switching gears, are there situations in which you feel your gender is more important than others – situations in which you're really aware that you're a female?

*Interviewee:* I don't remember exact situations, but I know that many situations, I'm afraid because I'm a female. I don't remember any.

*Interviewer:* Okay. That's fine. Okay.

*[End of Audio]*



*Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. The participant identification number is 1.1.94. The date is February 19, 2011. The location is Milton's in the Union. First, how would you describe yourself physically?

*Interviewee:* I'd probably say that I'm fairly average.

*Interviewer:* So if you were meeting somebody new for the first time and you said, "This is how you're going to know me," what would you say?

*Interviewee:* I would say that I have brown hair – shoulder length – blue eyes. I'd probably describe what I'm wearing.

*Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?

*Interviewee:* Average to slightly overweight.

*Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* What was said?

*Interviewee:* Comments anywhere from "you're looking good." Sometimes comments about the booty. My sister always used to joke – I had a ghetto booty. She would joke that I have a big butt.

*Interviewer:* And would these come from family members or –

*Interviewee:* Family members, oh yeah.

*Interviewer:* How would that make you feel?

*Interviewee:* I took it in stride. It didn't make me feel too bad.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action afterwards?

*Interviewee:* No, not really. I was okay with it.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* My immediate family – actually all of my family – we're really kind of just not that great about food. They snack a lot – eat a lot of junk food. Things have gotten a little bit better. My mom is on a renal diet, so we've gotten a lot of junk food out of the house. As far as my husband and I,

we're really very good about food. We don't snack a lot. On a daily basis, we usually eat a good, healthy meal at night. That sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* So did your family have any rules about food? You couldn't eat at a certain time or eat certain types of foods?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat its meals?

*Interviewee:* We usually eat our meals in the living room watching TV.

*Interviewer:* Would you talk about anything?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes. We usually talked about – we'd talk about our day. We'd talk about, you know, what was going on in our lives.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably right now, I talk about it fairly regularly. Maybe a couple times a week with my husband. We both are kind of trying to lose weight.

*Interviewer:* So you talk about it with your husband. Is that generally who you talk about it with?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* What is your husband's body shape?

*Interviewee:* He's slightly overweight – has a bit of a spare tire.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations or does he?

*Interviewee:* We both do.

*Interviewer:* And where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Just around the house. Usually not at the dinner table, but in the bathroom if I weigh myself. I recently dropped down to my before pregnancy weight. That was a big deal, so we were happy about that. That sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Like with regards to feelings or what?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I mean, something someone said that made you feel really good.

*Interviewee:* The best conversation I had was right before I was about to deliver. I had a preemie – he was delivered at 36 weeks, which is just a little bit early – or 34 weeks rather – and it was one of my friends, said, "You look great." She said, "You look fantastic." Several of my girl friends commented about how little I looked and I really appreciated that being – feeling like a beached whale, unable to lay on my back, you know, that sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. What's the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* I think the worst conversation was after I delivered and was not – I could not lose weight after. I had an initial drop and then I stayed at this one weight for like nine months. I had a conversation with my husband actually about, "I can't lose this weight," and he's like, "What are you eating? How much are you exercising?" That sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* I'm fairly comfortable talking about my weight with everybody. I think part of that comes from after having a baby you realize your body isn't your own anymore. It's your baby's. Physicians come in and are checking you out, that sort of thing. When you're huge and people are checking – you have total strangers walking in and checking you out, it really doesn't faze you anymore. People just put their hands on your stomach.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people your shape?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes. Yeah, usually I do.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Not very.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight – like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* How much?

*Interviewee:* I lost about 25 pounds.

*Interviewer:* And when was this?

*Interviewee:* That was a year ago.

*Interviewer:* After the pregnancy?

*Interviewee:* After the pregnancy, yeah.

*Interviewer:* How did you do it?

*Interviewee:* I breast fed, which is a huge part of it. I ate really well. I tried to exercise as much as I can or be active with my infant.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I felt okay. I sometimes felt kind of larger. It was kind of hard to identify – it was really hard to figure out what to wear because in my mind I was still a couple sizes smaller, so it was hard to go from like a size large in pregnancy clothes to figuring out what size I was in regular clothes again. I was a size four before I got pregnant and so it was hard for me to see that, "I'm no longer a size four, I'm a size whatever." So that was hard.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* I feel great.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Weight is a personal issue in my family because of health concerns. Like my sisters – our weight has fluctuated for various reasons. Sometimes we do kind of talk about weight or we'll comment about weight sometimes.

*Interviewer:* So is it talked about frequently?

*Interviewee:* Fairly frequently, I would say.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about them or are they treated differently?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about them?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes there'll be comments about how tiny or, "You're a stick," or that sort of thing. Not really poking fun, mostly just out of concern as to what's going on.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Maybe occasionally.

*Interviewer:* Like when would you be self-conscious?

*Interviewee:* Maybe when I'm dressing to impress, you know, with regards to – having to dress up for a special occasion and that sort of thing or trying to find something that I want to wear that I think will look really good. That sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after those sorts of experiences?

*Interviewee:* I'm kind of like at my brink of time allotted, so I usually don't. I usually don't do a really radical diet or a radical exercise program because I'm already eating well and I'm already exercising, so, for me, it's not so much of – I'm not exercising or dieting to lose weight, I'm doing it just to be healthy and try to be as healthy as I can. The weight thing isn't usually a big deal for that.

*Interviewer:* Now, kind of switching gears, are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* In certain aspects of my life, yes.

*Interviewer:* Like what types of situations?

*Interviewee:* I'm a professional, so in the professional world, femininity is something that is looked upon differently than masculinity.

*Interviewer:* Does anyone say anything or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* Usually not because you're a girl, but there will be comments about things that are female attributes that they will kind of associate with a situation and bring that into it.

*Interviewer:* Okay.  
*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 9: Ashley**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. This is participant number 1.1.93. The date is February 18, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I say I'm in physically good shape. I'm thin. I'm definitely not in shape, I don't do strenuous exercise, but I wouldn't consider myself overweight by any means.
- Interviewer:* Okay. So if you had to describe yourself to a blind date and said, "This is how I'll look," what would you say?
- Interviewee:* Curvy Bonita.
- Interviewer:* Okay. That sounds very nice. All right. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* I have two sets of friends. I either have all the girls that are really tall, busty, but heavier girls, and then I have the other girls that are way past over shape who work out every day or run marathons and put me to shame. I actually don't hang out with many girls who are not my size, which is kind of odd.
- Interviewer:* When you were younger, or just in your past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yeah, my dad actually did. When I was in like junior high I was a bit heavier and shorter. He was very, "You could work out a little more. You could do a little more, Samantha," and I'm like, "Okay, dad. Thanks for the confidence boost in life." My mother never felt that way because my mother's always been a little heavier, so she's always been very, "Oh, you look beautiful."
- Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* Pretty bad. My dad was not – he's never been a very encouraging person when it comes to physical appearance. But it definitely did leave some problems in my life and whatnot.
- Interviewer:* Did you take any action regarding those comments?
- Interviewee:* I did become anorexic for quite a bit of time during high school. I would pretty much eat a piece of bread for breakfast, skip lunch, and then kind of nibble on crackers or something in the afternoon. I did that for a year or two and it didn't really change my weight crazy because obviously I'm not

crazy heavy, but it definitely did affect me. I know some of my friends noticed and it was bad.

*Interviewer:* How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* My family is very food oriented. We drink, we eat, we laugh. My dad's family is Hispanic, so we cook and we cook and we cook and that's all we do. My mom's family is Irish and German, so we cook and we cook and we eat. That's about the only time we get together as a family, if we're eating. We don't just get together to be together. We eat.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* My grandma's only rule is to eat dessert first while you're still hungry. That's what she taught me at the age of five. I don't know why you'd teach a five year old that. My dad was the opposite. When I lived at his house, I wasn't allowed in the fridge. I wasn't allowed to eat food without permission. Then I'd go to my mother's house – my parents are divorced – and she's like, "Eat whatever. Eat whenever."

*Interviewer:* How did your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Two different ways, like I said, since I lived one week with dad and one week with mom. My dad was very traditional. We all sat at the dinner table. You did not miss dinner for any reason. Everyone had a spot. Food was passed. You didn't eat until everyone there. Then, my mom's was, "Here's the food. It's on the counter in there." Everyone went to their separate rooms and we all ate in the bedrooms, which is now the way I prefer to eat usually – in front of a TV rather than at a dinner table.

*Interviewer:* What would you discuss when you would eat together?

*Interviewee:* At my dad's house, never. We never discussed anything.

*Interviewer:* Really?

*Interviewee:* My little brothers might talk about their school, but if I mentioned, "I met this boy," my dad was like, "No, stop." I'm like, "Okay. Never mind." He's like, "I don't want to hear about it." I'm like, "Okay. Thanks, Dad."

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't think I talk as much about it. Unfortunately, I am very skinny for my family, because both of my parents are heavier, so if I open my mouth to my family, they're like, "Shut up Samantha, you're just so skinny." I don't feel that way, so I've kind of just learned to keep it to myself even if

I don't feel I'm physically the way I should be because I'm better off than most of my family.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* My boyfriend, obviously, and, of course, he's very supportive, "You look great." My mother, I talk about it when I feel that I'm gaining weight a little bit. She knows that I've put on a little weight, but doesn't think anything of it. It's usually, she's like, "You're beautiful, don't worry about it." You know moms.

*Interviewer:* So what does your boyfriend look like in terms of his weight?

*Interviewee:* He is a skinny, little thing. He's a soccer player and he was a competitive swimmer. I tend to date guys who are very athletically driven and I'm like, "I'm gonna sit there in the bleachers and watch." But he's very well in shape, but he's very, very lean and his entire family is that way. He's probably the heavier one of his family and I'm like, "You would be microscopic in my family."

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Just at home or at my mom's place. For me, my family is a big part of my friendship. My mom and I are best of friends. It's simply just sitting in the living room, chilling, we're watching Dr. Phil and the girl on there is bulimic and we just hear them talking. So wherever it happens.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations or do they?

*Interviewee:* I usually do, I think, because usually I'm looking in the mirror or saw something on TV and thinking about it and it comes up. No one never really initiates it, except for maybe my father occasionally when I've gained a little weight.

*Interviewer:* What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* It's gonna sound really odd – but with my dad, but he basically said that—because one of my cousins, I had a lot of problems with growing up. He was like, "You know why she doesn't like you?" I'm like, "Why?" "Because you're so much prettier and skinnier than her," and stuff like that. It was a very odd conversation to have because he kind of put down my cousin, but it was one of the few times my dad was very positive about my appearance and my physical shape, which was very rare for even my dad to be positive. He's kind of a glass half empty kind of man.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?



*Interviewee:* It had to be – I was dating a military guy and, of course, he can do one armed push-ups for hours, and I can't even run. He told me, "You would be just better off if you lost weight." He just flatly said, "You should lose 20 pounds." If I lost 20 pounds, I would be like in double digits. I can't lose 20 pounds.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably my dad because he's not very positive.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with people who are like the same shape as you?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I feel like a lot of people who tend to be my weight tend to be more athletic and actually go out and do sports and stuff. I play no sports. I do not run for enjoyment. I am the person who has the giant tennis ball I throw to my dog while I sit in a chair and watch it run.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Sadly, it's really important. With my parents, it's just always been a top priority and now my job is going to go into sales, so now I feel even more needy to be in good physical shape.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* Plus I'm a girl in a male dominated field.

*Interviewer:* All right. Have you ever lost a large amount of weight – like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Only once if I did that and it was actually due to medication. It was a new med that you have to eat food with and I didn't eat food in the morning. I was one of the kids that wakes up five minutes past when school started.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I didn't think much of it. I thought it was great. I was like, "Wow, I'm this little twig now." My mother and doctor were freaking out. I'm like, "Don't have an appetite, can't really do anything."

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* It was one of the times I felt I was heavier, so it was definitely during the awkward puberty where you stop growing one way but you're growing the

other way. So I was more than happy to lose the weight and I was really sad when it came back.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family? Is it important?

*Interviewee:* It's not important, but it's a big concern of mine because, like I said, most of my family are obese and overweight and they suffer diabetes. It's not just one side of the family, it's both of my families. Everyone in my family calls me Skinny Minnie because I am a freak of nature – like mailman's child – because I don't look like one of the family.

*Interviewer:* Do people in your family talk about weight?

*Interviewee:* No, they avoid it. No one talks about it. I have a cousin who's in maybe sixth grade – she outweighs me. She can pick me up and I'm like, "You're in sixth grade. You should not be not able to fit in my clothes." No one seems concerned about it and I'm like, "Okay."

*Interviewer:* So people in your family are overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What would you say – how many are – percentage wise?

*Interviewee:* Pretty much all of us except maybe a handful of people in my family aren't and that's usually because they took from the other side of their family. But my mother had gastric bypass surgery and stuff and she's still at a heavier weight. My dad's always been a heavy, bulky man. My brother and me are about the only two that aren't heavy. Even my brother is getting heavy now because he's gotten kind of lazy.

*Interviewer:* Do people talk about them?

*Interviewee:* No. The only weight we talk about it is how I'm too skinny. No one thinks I should be able to eat the way I do and still be skinny.

*Interviewer:* So is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* I probably have one cousin that is. She could eat a horse and she'd still be – but that's her other side of – her family is all skinny. But besides that, not really.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about her?

*Interviewee:* Not as much because her other side of the family is all that way, so it looks more normal. But since both of mine are heavy, I seem odd no matter where I go.

*Interviewer:* Right. Is she treated differently?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. She's tall and skinny, so it's a little more normal looking. Her dad is very tall and skinny, so everyone sees her dad and is like, "Oh, obviously."

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Oh, I'm always self-conscious about my weight. I don't like wearing tight, tight clothes. I wear loose ones around my stomach to give the illusion that I'm skinny.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe a particular situation in which you'd feel self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Pretty much when I go out with my friends and I see all the girls in the little tight black dresses and stuff. Even when they do have a little bit of stomach, they're able to work it some. I just never feel that I'm in that much of shape that I can wear something like that and guys would still want to hang out with me and stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after you see people like this?

*Interviewee:* I usually do – usually once a year I get into a good diet, do the healthy foods. I don't do work-outs too much. I do yoga because I like that. I don't like strenuous activity. I usually take up yoga usually during the summer and I take up a lot more healthier food then. During the school year, it's mac and cheese and Ramon noodles. The only running I get is running up the hill.

*Interviewer:* When you're late.

*Interviewee:* Pretty much!

*Interviewer:* Kind of switching gears here – are there ever situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other aspects of you?

*Interviewee:* I have to say only in my career because I'm an engineer, so there's a lot of time when – like my senior project, it's a class of 30 and I'm the only girl in the project, so we had people come to interview and I'm there and they're like, "Let me take a picture of the girl. Take a picture of the girl

with the thing because she's the girl" and I'm like, "I'm more than a girl, but okay."

*Interviewer:* All right. Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 10: Alex**

*Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. This is participant identification number 1.1.92. The date is February 18, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First, how would you describe yourself physically?

*Interviewee:* I would say I'm pretty tall. I played a lot of sports in high school. Brown eyes. I was born with blonde hair, then it turned brown and I dyed it blond. So yeah, I guess tall, brown eyes, blond hair.

*Interviewer:* So if you were going on a blind date or something and they said, "Describe yourself so that I'll know who you are," what would you say?

*Interviewee:* I guess I would say tall, big smile, big eyes. I don't know, my dad – we're a big Italian family, so I just have big features. Blonde hair, big brown eyes, big smile, tall, I guess.

*Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?

*Interviewee:* All my roommates are a pretty active bunch. I would say they're all pretty fit and physically look in shape.

*Interviewer:* So are they about the same size as you?

*Interviewee:* One of my friends is really, really skinny. We try to keep tabs on her and make sure that she's eating regularly because it's sometimes hard to think that she is. Other than that, everyone seems to be doing all right.

*Interviewer:* Good. When you were younger, did anyone ever comment about your weight?

*Interviewee:* My mom did. Never in a bad way, she would just – she would always tell my sister and I that she struggled with it a lot when she was a young kid, so she never wanted us to have that problem. She would just encourage us just to be active and participate in activities we enjoyed that would keep us moving.

*Interviewer:* Good. How did it make you feel?

*Interviewee:* I more than anything just felt sad for her that she had to deal with that when she was a young kid. My sister and I were never to the point where I actually felt like something was wrong with me. It didn't, I don't think, hurt me too much.

*Interviewer:* So did you ever take any action after these comments?

*Interviewee:* No. I guess it was a good reality check for me once in a while – you know, however long your new year's resolution – maybe the next couple weeks I stepped it up in practice. But other than that, not really.

*Interviewer:* How is your family around food? Do you have any rules about food or anything?

*Interviewee:* Not really. We eat Italian. We like to eat. I don't know. My mom – at home, she tries to cook healthy and a big firm believer – my dad's a doctor and a firm believer in moderation and don't worry about not eating anything in particular as long as you're not eating a ton of it, it's okay.

*Interviewer:* That's good. So were there any foods you couldn't eat or you couldn't eat past certain times or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* Nope. My dad just, you know, sometimes would be like – if it's 10:30 at night or something, would be like, "Not the best to be eating this late," but other than that, no. If we went to the grocery store with mom, we normally got some perks out of the deal by – you can pick out whatever you wanted, so it was fun.

*Interviewer:* Good. How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* We normally sit down and we try to wait for my dad as much as possible for him to come join us, but the kitchen table, all four of us.

*Interviewer:* What would you all discuss during these meals?

*Interviewee:* Just anything. We were reminiscing the other day and since my dad is Mr. Science, our conversations would be like, "Girls, what do you think this is? A solid, a liquid, or a gas?" You know, just stupid, random facts or just how everyone's day had been. What did you do today? How was school? That type of stuff.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I guess kind of fairly often just with my roommates and stuff as kind of – one of my roommates kind of recently was like, "None of my clothes are fitting me anymore." Then, our other roommate who we're kind of worried about, we try to encourage things or be like, "Hey, you really could stand to gain a few pounds." Every couple of days, I guess.

*Interviewer:* And these people generally have your same body type sort of.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. My one roommate who doesn't fit her clothes, she still looks great, but my other one, I mean, she is like very noticeably thin.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Just really anywhere in our house, but primarily our house in their bedrooms trying on clothes or something.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate them or do they?

*Interviewee:* One friend who doesn't fit into her clothes, she normally initiates that one, but our other roommate, it's normally us being like, "Hey, you can eat more than popcorn today."

*Interviewer:* What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably with my family or my boyfriend – just somebody being like, "You are just great the way you are. Don't even worry about it." I guess that type of deal would be the best conversation, for instance.

*Interviewer:* What about – what's the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* Recently – last semester, we were in a \_\_\_\_\_, so we had these really little tutus and we came back from break and one of the girls was like noticeably thinner. She dropped 20 or 30 pounds over winter break and we were like, "What happened?" Looking back at the pictures, I looked at her and I looked at me. "Well, we look the same and you lost 20 pounds," so just kind of talking to people around, that was a really big away like, "Do I know what I look like?" Why did she lose all that weight when – sorry, it took a long way to get to that.

*Interviewer:* No, it's fine. Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Not really, I guess. I don't know. I feel like – most of my guy friends think it's hilarious that we have such an issue talking about our weight, so that's always been kind of funny to me. But it's not something that I advertise, I guess. I don't know. It's not really a problem.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, definitely, for some odd reason – I don't know why. I just kind of feel like – I consider myself a fairly fit person, so if someone has a similar shape, "What do you do?" So it gives you something in common, I feel like.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I don't know if it's a huge part, but I do enjoy playing soccer at the rec or doing things like that, so I feel like if I were to stop that and my weight would change, I feel like I would kind of be a different person. So I guess in that regard, it changes who I am, but it's not a huge aspect. One of my roommates has diabetes. She literally – she can't help it, it's not a part of her or who she is or anything. I guess it kind of just depends on the circumstance.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight – like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Nope.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Everyone's really normal. My grandpa's kind of gotten on my grandma the past couple of years. She loves to bake and stuff and I know she's not her lovely little size two anymore that she once was. But everyone has some activity they do on a regular basis and is fairly active.

*Interviewer:* Is it important in your family?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Both my parents work in the health profession, so they're pretty set on making sure that everyone stays active and is healthy.

*Interviewer:* So is it talked about a lot in your family?

*Interviewee:* No, it's never like, "Hey, you need to get outside, run a lap around the house or something." It's like, after dinner, "Hey, let's go for a walk." Something like that, so it's not directly talked about.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Nope, I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Nope.

*Interviewer:* No? Okay. Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes just because of my height, I kind of feel like – most of my roommates are short, little, tiny people and I'm like – I will never, ever be a size two because my body frame is – it would never fit that. Sometimes



it's kind of like – I wish I was more petit, I guess. I do also \_\_\_\_\_. If you took everything off my bones, I still wouldn't be a size two.

*Interviewer:* Are there particular situations in which you feel this way?

*Interviewee:* Like if we're all going out to do something or if it's a big group event. I would say that would be the most.

*Interviewer:* Do you take any action afterwards?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Kind of shifting gears here, are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Yes, I would say yes. Just because – even talking to my boyfriend or my guy friends – I think they're the nicest, kindest people, but then when I ask them, "Why don't you like her? Is it because she's overweight or what?" And they're like, "We want someone who takes care of themselves." I'm like, "Who cares? What does it matter? They might be the most awesome person." And they're like, "I don't know." So I feel like that's somewhat of a determinant factor in their eyes, so I guess I would see it as like a part of me as like a part of my gender, I guess. Unfortunately, it gets perceived by others, I guess I would say.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Average weight Participant 11: Gabrielle**

- Interviewer:* Okay. So first question: How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Oh, I don't know. I'd say I'm just normal.
- Interviewer:* Normal. Okay. So if you were going on a blind date and they said, "How will I recognize you?" How would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* Probably the girl with the green mark, because I have a birthmark, so.
- Interviewer:* Okay.
- Interviewee:* Or what I'm wearing maybe.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* It's different, you know. Some are more curvy, and some are skinny, some are tall, short.
- Interviewer:* So are they about the same size as you or?
- Interviewee:* No.
- Interviewer:* No. When you were younger or any time in the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Yes. What was said?
- Interviewee:* I used to be really, really, really skinny and like he would always like say – like, my brother would always say, "I'm boney, boney."
- Interviewer:* Right.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. And friends and things like that would say, "Gain weight."
- Interviewer:* How'd it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* I didn't like it, you know because to me, I mean, I didn't – I was just skinny. I couldn't help that. So it made me feel bad.
- Interviewer:* Did you ever take any action after you heard those comments?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No. How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* Oh, my family, we like to eat a lot.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* My mom makes us eat like, one vegetable at dinner and things like that, but for the most part not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Were there –was there anything you couldn't eat?

*Interviewee:* Well, we were only allowed to have like not a lot of sweets. Do you know what I mean? So.

*Interviewer:* How's your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Well, when I was younger, we used to sit at the table and everything but then like, I don't know, after my parents got divorced it's kind of just everyone for themselves.

*Interviewer:* When you would have these family dinners what would you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* Just class and life, really, like what's going on.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I try to avoid talking about my weight.

*Interviewer:* Okay. If you do talk about it, who do you talk about it with?

*Interviewee:* Mostly, just like my parents, the doctor.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Do you initiate these conversations or do they?

*Interviewee:* They.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right. What is the best conversation you've ever had with someone about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, my mom said, "Oh, you know, you're gonna appreciate that figure when you're older." So, that's probably the best.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Oh, I'd say probably when I first started working. I was 16 and someone thought I was anorexic. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Most people, like the general public I would say.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Although I've gained weight.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Not very because I hope people can look past that.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight, like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Over ten? No.

*Interviewer:* No. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* It's difficult because my mom used to be really, really, really, really skinny and then she had children, and now she's curvy. And so for the most part I'd say we come from kind of thick, curvy people.

*Interviewer:* Is weight important in your family? Like, is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Usually it's dieting and weight loss, so.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Yes. Is anything said about them?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Like, what's said?

*Interviewee:* Oh, like my brothers, he's become a bit chubby. And so you know, especially my mom will say, "Oh, you know you need to be a little bit more careful about how you eat. You might want to try going to the gym."

*Interviewer:* Is he treated differently?

*Interviewee:* I think that my mom will kind of – she’s a little bit harder on him, I think. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Just me.

*Interviewer:* All right. And is anything said about you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. What’s – it’s similar to what you said before?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* So, you’re boney and –

*Interviewee:* You need to gain weight. Yeah. And it’s like, I eat actually, a whole lot and I’ve been gaining weight. It’s just that I don’t gain a lot of it.

*Interviewer:* Are you treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes.

*Interviewer:* What is a situation – when – can you describe a situation when you were self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, because when I’m wearing certain clothes and things like that, I don’t think that they really look as good on me because I don’t fill out in – you know that. For jeans, it’s not so bad but for t-shirts, yeah.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after that? Like –

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee:* I try to eat a lot.

*Interviewer:* And then, switching gears, are there ever situations in which you feel your gender is more important than other parts of you? So, situations in which you really know, I'm a girl here.

*Interviewee:* I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 1: Hema**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. Participant identification number is one dot two dot zero three. The date is December 2, 2010 and the location is my office, 117 Bailey Hall. Alright. So we'll get started with just kind of a general question. How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I feel like if I put – it's funny you say that because I just had this conversation with my mom about how like how obviously in college you feel like you gain weight, but I feel like if I put more of an effort in, I have the potential to be like a lot thinner or a lot like – not prettier. I think there's aspects of my body that are pretty, but like there's obviously places that need improvement.
- Interviewer:* So would you – well if you were going on a blind date with someone and you were like describing yourself on the phone. This is how you'll know me. What would you say?
- Interviewee:* Like my hair color. You mean physically?
- Interviewer:* Yeah.
- Interviewee:* I'd say not short but not tall. See I don't like to say the word big or bulky because I feel like those just are like condescending on yourself, but sometimes if you're describing to someone on a blind date, I don't know – I would say like bigger boned?
- Interviewer:* Yeah.
- Interviewee:* I don't know – probably that's it.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe the body shapes of your closest friends? What is their physical body shape?
- Interviewee:* It really varies a lot. I really like only have one friend that's like a giant and skinny. She's like tall, blonde, skinny, you know typical friend. \_\_\_\_\_ they look like they're sisters but they're not. I mean like brown hair, somewhat – I don't mean this in a mean way. Because I'm obviously not the skinniest person ever, but they're either like overweight or like not underweight but like average. They're like your ideal person.
- Interviewer:* In your past has – and this can be anywhere in time from when you were really little to now, has anyone ever commented on your weight?
- Interviewee:* I mean like doctors, or like my mom, but that –

*Interviewer:* More –

*Interviewee:* But not like bullying –

*Interviewer:* Anyone. Say anything about your weight.

*Interviewee:* What do you mean? Do you mean like if it looks like I've lost weight or gained weight, or something like that?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Or –

*Interviewee:* When I used to be a lot heavier at the beginning of the summer and I lost weight and like people noticed that. And like my grandma will notice if I've lost weight or – but I mean in a non-conceited way I think that my personality outweighs physical characteristics. And I think that because I have – I like to think this of myself and I've heard it from other people too so I'm not like making it up, but I think that a lot of times – my mom always says this. You could be 500 pounds, you could be 90 pounds. It's your personality and the way you present yourself. If you're clean, polished person, you're going to come off as a – someone's going to want to talk to you. Whereas if you're like shlubby and fat and – not fat, that's not a nice word. But like you know, fat is the right word though if you're like fat and you don't take care of yourself and it's just how you present yourself. And I think that's what probably answers that question best is that if I'm on that downfall, which I have been at points, whether due to stress or due to situations with friends, or like right now I'm stressed, but like I think those would be the only times when people have really commented. When they don't see me using that highest potential of personality.

*Interviewer:* That's a really good way to phrase that so I'm making sure I write it down. You know, when people talk about – if people talk about your weight, how does that make you feel?

*Interviewee:* I mean – the thing is I wouldn't say that – it's like my grandma when she's comparing you to my other cousins, so it's like annoying. But when – if it's a comparing situation it's very annoying and it's hurtful. But if it's constructive criticism situation, where it's like my mom saying it for my health? Like this summer my mom and I did a lot of work out classes together and made sure that I came to college with a healthy lifestyle. Forgot what I was going to tell you. Then it makes me feel good. But when I'm at the point where she's telling that it's something bad – you know, I like to think that it's – I try to make it a positive situation.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?



*Interviewee:* What do you mean? Clarify that?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So like does your family have any rules about food. Like you can't eat this type of food or –

*Interviewee:* When we were little maybe. But it was never like you can't do this, you can't do that. My parents don't like those rules if that makes any sense. I mean obviously to an extent. Like you can't go out and get in trouble and that kind of thing, but they encourage healthier choices. Like my mom makes healthy dinners, packs healthy lunches. She makes breakfast in the morning or whatever, to promote a healthy lifestyle. But at the end of the day, obviously some of the decisions are in our own hands. I went to a high school for example that had five thousand kids in it, five different cafeterias, you could choose from Sub – well there was like a thing where you could choose like sandwiches, pizza, hot dogs, and then something else. I forgot what it was. And then they had different lines for like a sandwich bar. All these different options. Now they just built a coffee shop in there. It's disgusting! All these different things that you're surrounded with them. There's vending machines everywhere and there's Vitamin water which is low cal, you know that kind of stuff? Where at the end of the day that was in our own hands. And if I was having a stressful day and I needed a vitamin water or I needed something to wake me up or something to do that? At the end of the day it's our own decision. It was never like don't do it.

*Interviewer:* How does your family eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Before my sister went to college, we ate as a family, all four of us. My dad, though, works pretty – he does orthopedic sales so sometimes surgeries go late and he has to stay in the surgeries. So we try to eat as a family. I'm very involved – in high school I was very involved in a lot of different activities but sometimes my schedule is off with my sister's, but then it went from like three to two, with just me and my mom when my sister went away last year. To now the two of them.

*Interviewer:* What would you all talk about when you ate?

*Interviewee:* Our days. A lot of the times we would watch Wheel of Fortune and play together.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] Are you good at it?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Mom and I are good at it. My sister is a little slower. What else did we do? I mean just talk about our days, talk about if there are decisions that needed to be made, a lot of during the past two years it's been about

college and college visits and working and [yawns] I'm sorry, I just woke up. Working schedules and that kind of thing. Just like logistics.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Just to my mom.

*Interviewer:* Just to your mom? How often do you talk about it with her?

*Interviewee:* I mean not as much anymore because I'm not home. But when I was at home, maybe like twice a week?

*Interviewer:* What does your mom look like?

*Interviewee:* She's like me. \_\_\_\_\_ exactly – like an exact clone. Maybe like a few pounds heavier or lighter. I've never like asked my mom her weight.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I don't either. It's a touchy subject. *[Laughter]* Where would you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* In the car if it was like just the two of us. Or after the doctor. Or in her room or my room. Kitchen.

*Interviewee:* Would you initiate these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Most of the time, yeah. Almost all the time actually.

*Interviewer:* What's one of the best conversations you've ever had about your weight? Like something that made you feel really good.

*Interviewee:* I think when I have a check up after – I have my yearly check up and then I have one before I went away just to make sure I had all my tests and stuff, had all my shots and stuff, and that doctor weighed me and I'd lost like ten pounds over the summer so that was probably one of those times.

*Interviewer:* Nice. What's one of the worst conversations you've ever had?

*Interviewee:* I would just say in general probably again at the doctor when – during physical when they weigh you and they're like well you've gone up and this and that.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I remember one time I was at the doctor and they were weighing me and I feel like those scales they have in there are so brutal! Because they like move the thing and it's like clunk! And so they had to like move me up and she's like did you know you've gained weight? And I'm like no –

like just my clothes aren't fitting? I'm not feeling very well? No, I haven't noticed at all! *[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Right.

*Interviewer:* So who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Like friends. I'm really only comfortable talking about it with my doctor and my mom.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I think my body is pretty unique in the sense that like the bulk of my weight is around my stomach and if I were to lose to weight, that's where it comes from and then I look completely different.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Percentage wise? Or just like in general?

*Interviewer:* Just in general.

*Interviewee:* I think at some points if there's nothing else wrong – like if nothing else is going on in my life and I have reflection time, I think that's when it comes out the most how much my weight means to me. But I think a lot of times it takes me a down fall to realize the importance of it. Like it's relevance to my life and how it's affecting me and how it could affect me and how it has the potential of being a dangerous thing.

*Interviewer:* So you mentioned before you lost weight in the past. How much have you – like what's the most you've ever lost?

*Interviewee:* This summer probably 12 pounds.

*Interviewer:* Why did you lose it?

*Interviewee:* I was nervous about coming to college for the first time and being surrounded by things, you know?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Crappy. I also thing part of it was insecurity and coming here I felt a lot more secure and okay with myself once I had lost that weight. And I actually lost weight when I got here. I obviously gained it back, but I felt a lot more secure coming here and more outgoing. And I think that's allowed me to flourish and be friends with a lot more people.

*Interviewer:* Alright!

*Interviewee:* A long booklet!

*Interviewer:* I know. Actually it's not very long. I just space them out so I could write.

*Interviewee:* How many of these do you have to do?

*Interviewer:* 45.

*Interviewee:* How many have you had?

*Interviewer:* I think you're number ten.

*Interviewee:* Wow.

*Interviewer:* So, I'm hoping – I was hoping to get 20 before the break, but it looks like I might be at 12. But it's better than none, so –

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* So you feel more secure since you lost the weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* So how would you describe weight in your family like? Is it important? Is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* [Yawn] Sorry! It's not talked about. It is important to me and my mom. My sister and my dad are like the taller and skinnier ones and mom and I are like the shorter and bulkier.

*Interviewer:* Is your mom overweight?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight?

*Interviewee:* Probably. I mean I don't like number-wise, but maybe. I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No. [Laughter]

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Oh, all the time.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe a situation where you've –

*Interviewee:* Well, like getting ready to go out or – it's funny that I'm doing this today because lately I've been having where I'm at the point where I think I should go back to the rec center on Monday and Tuesday and then I was like okay – well time of the month. I'm not going back there for awhile. So yeah, I mean – what was the question again?

*Interviewer:* Describe a situation which you feel self-conscious.

*Interviewee:* So like lately when I've been going out I'm like I won't like something on me or like try on a semi formal dress and I don't really like it on me anymore. Or something like that. That's probably when.

*Interviewer:* Why do you think you feel that way?

*Interviewee:* The people I surround myself with I think play a large roll in there. But they also play a large roll in motivation to do better, so it's a win – win, you know?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Bittersweet situation.

*Interviewer:* So, you mentioned that you – it kind of inspires you to want to go to the rec and things like that. Are there – now kind of switching gears. Are there situations in which you feel like you're self-conscious of your gender as a female?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No?

*Interviewee:* No, never.

*Interviewer:* Well I mean times when you're like \_\_\_\_aware that I'm a female here.

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No?

*Interviewee:* I thought you meant like if you're at the bar and you realize you're a girl, like that?

*Interviewer:* Well, that's kind of like – yeah but not really.

*[End of Audio]*

## **Overweight and Obese Participant 2: Kristin**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. This is participant number 1.2.23. The date is February 18, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey. So first question, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I think I'm normal – not too thin, not too big – just normal. I say I'm curvy sometimes. I have some wide hips, but it's okay.
- Interviewer:* Okay. So if you had to describe yourself to a blind date and was like, "This is how you'll know me at the restaurant," how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I would say dark hair and big eyes. Also, I'd probably say what I'd be wearing – like, "I'll be wearing a red dress" or "I carry a huge blue bag." Something like that.
- Interviewer:* All right. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* A lot of my friends are dancers, so I would say thin and muscular. A lot of ballet dancers, a lot of hip-hop dancers. Then, I have friends who aren't dancers who are normal.
- Interviewer:* Good. All right. So when you were younger, did anyone ever comment about your weight?
- Interviewee:* My dad said something to me – it wasn't anything bad, I was just 13 and took it the wrong way. I was like, "Dad, does this shirt make me look fat?" and he's like, "Huh? What?" I think he was laughing that I would even ask that question. When I was younger, I was like, "What?" I told my mom and my mom went straight to my dad like, "You cannot do that." Obviously, he was just laughing because he was like, "Are you kidding me? You're asking me that?"
- Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* Bad. I felt bad even though he didn't mean anything by it.
- Interviewer:* Did you take any action after this comment?
- Interviewee:* No. My mom was like – my mom explained it, "He's just watching TV." You know.
- Interviewer:* *[Side conversation]* So how was your family around food?

- Interviewee:* My mom's side and my dad's side are totally different. My dad's side, it is the thing. It is the huge thing that – my grandma's always like, "Food is love and I just love you." I'm actually going there next weekend and I'm planning on having all this food pushed on me. So that's my dad's side of the family. My mom's side – my grandmother is like, "You eat like a little bird." But, you know, my grandma on my mom's side is just very – not like a hippie or organic healthy, but she makes sure you have the corn and the grain and the meat – and I'm a vegetarian, so she's all worried like, "I'm going to get you the Bible and show you where God gave us \_\_\_\_ to eat." So, yeah, a much bigger thing on my dad's side of the family. My dad, not so much though. He's kind of like the black sheep. He moved away to Chicago and went to college – not him, it's just his family.
- Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?
- Interviewee:* My family, like my mom and dad?
- Interviewer:* Yeah.
- Interviewee:* You just are not allowed to drink the last Coke in the refrigerator. I'm trying to think – no. When I was younger, I would go in the kitchen and my mom would be like, "No, kitchen is closed." I do that with my niece and nephew and everything. Or when I was in elementary and middle school, like, "Mom, I'm hungry. Can I have this?" She'd say, "No, I'm making dinner." Nothing really like, "This is bad, don't eat this. This is good, eat this." They just didn't want me to ruin my appetite, I suppose.
- Interviewer:* Yeah. How does your family typically eat their meals?
- Interviewee:* My senior year of high school – my mom, when I was younger – like elementary and middle school, first couple of years of high school – we definitely, not necessarily ate at the table like we would do when we all went out to eat. But in my junior and senior year of high school, we were all just really busy and my dad is kind of like a freelancer, so he doesn't really have a work schedule. I'm going home tonight and having dinner with them. My parents are both on – my dad's on Weight Watchers and my mom's on Nutrisystem. They kind of eat their own food but we all eat together.
- Interviewer:* Okay. Have you ever tried Nutrisystem – like their meals?
- Interviewee:* I haven't had a meal but I've had one of their dessert things because my mom's like, "This is so good. Try it." I bit into it and the chocolate was disgusting – it tasted like one of those – do you remember those Activa calcium chocolate chews?



*Interviewer:* I do.

*Interviewee:* Oh my gosh, that's what it tasted like. It was awful.

*Interviewer:* So what do you all talk about when you eat together?

*Interviewee:* Generally just like, "What did you do today?" There's talk of getting a puppy at my house, so we're talking about that. We just check in with each other. My mom is always like, "Children who eat dinner with their families are more likely to go to college and be successful." I guess that's a thing, so my mom wanted to make sure that happened.

*Interviewer:* Good. How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Never, I don't think. I have no idea how much I weigh. I go to the gym not because I think I necessarily need to lose weight or put on muscle weight – I just feel better after I go to the gym. It's not like I'm like, "I'm burning calories to be more thin." I go because I want to. But, yeah, I never –

*Interviewer:* So you don't talk to anyone about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I'm trying to think – I was on birth control and it made me gain weight, so I talked to my mom about it and said, "Hey, I think I'm gaining weight" and she said, "Stop taking your birth control." I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What is the best conversation you've ever had with someone about your weight?

*Interviewee:* When I came back for winter break, everyone's like, "Wow, you look great." I don't know if it was "you look great" like "you look pretty" or "you look thin, you look athletic." But I started going to the gym my summer before college and so now everyone's like, "Why do you look so good?"

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* This is kind of just a funny story. I remember one time – I was probably like 14 and I was like really bloated from my period, but I was like, "Mom, look, look." She's like, "You're fine, you're just bloated." I was like, "No, what if I'm pregnant?" She's like, "Are you having sex?" I was like, "No, but what if somebody came into my room in the middle of the night." She was like, "You would have known." I was like, "I don't know." So obviously, I was acting crazy. I guess I just freaked out because I was like, "Oh my gosh" or "oh my gosh, I'm pregnant." It was like, "Duh, of course I'm not." Yeah, I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* People I know who wouldn't want to hear it or don't care. My mom and dad – they're not gonna be like – it's not that they don't want to hear it, they just are like – they don't think there's anything wrong with me. I know that they would just be like, "You're fine. You're great," which is good to hear.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I identify with anyone.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Like I said, when I say all my friends are normal – normal's like really a big spectrum for me. Yeah, I'd say it doesn't really matter.

*Interviewer:* This is part of the interview questionnaire, but I have a feeling I know what you're going to say to this, how important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Not important. I think my personality's so strong it doesn't matter. My boyfriend, he texted me, he was like, "Ha ha, looking at old Facebook pictures of you." I was like, "No, I was chubby junior year." He was like, "No, you weren't." Obviously, if it's not important to people I'm hanging out with, it's not important to me. I don't think it's important.

*Interviewer:* Good.

*Interviewee:* My mom was like – she wasn't like really obese, but she was overweight and she recently dropped a lot of pounds from Nutrisystem and I'm so happy for her and she's so happy, but it didn't matter. That's how I kind of feel about myself too.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight – like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* I know I lost ten pounds between summer and winter break – no crash dieting or cottage cheese and celery type thing. Yeah, I would say I have lost more than ten pounds at some time, but not in a month or anything.

*Interviewer:* Why did you lose it?

*Interviewee:* I think a lot of it was just walking to class and back. I'm on the hip-hop team here at KU and we practice four to five hours a week. I like to go to the gym.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I didn't really notice until after I'd lost it. I don't know. And then I didn't really notice I did until I went to my doctor appointment over winter break or whatever. It feels fine.

*Interviewer:* Describe weight in your family – like your mom and dad. Are they currently still overweight?

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't say so – maybe like a little bit.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is weight an important factor in your family?

*Interviewee:* No, not in my immediate family. In my mom and dad, no way. In my brother, no way. But like I said, my dad's side of the family – all of them are definitely overweight. A lot of them have diabetes – like my cousin who's like eight has diabetes just because she eats a lot. It's also in her family. But, then again, it's not like a big issue, "Oh, Molly's gaining some weight." It's just kind of how it is in Chicago. I say "in Chicago" because that's all Chicago is – that's my family. That's kind of how my Chicago family is. They're all overweight. Whenever my mom and dad and I go to Chicago for Thanksgiving, she, my aunt, and my grandma are always like, "Next year we're going to be really thin. We're going to go on Weight Watchers." And then my mom actually did, so she's really excited. We're actually going to Chicago next weekend, so she's really excited to go back and show all the weight she's lost.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't say my weight, but maybe just the way I look sometimes. The way clothes fall on my body sometimes, I just don't like it. I'm not like, "Oh, my thighs look huge." It's usually, "The way the skirt falls, it makes my thighs look huge." Something like that, you know.

*Interviewer:* Is there a specific situation in which you would think that way?

*Interviewee:* A lot of times when I'm trying on clothes. I blame it on the clothes. I'm not going to starve myself to fit into something – just get a different something. Another situation – I don't know.

*Interviewer:* Okay, that's fine. So switching gears, are there situations in which you feel your gender is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Can you repeat the question?

*Interviewer:* Are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female are more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* I would say no. A lot of my good friends are guys and in the past – we're just really close and we're like a little gang and I'm the only girl, so I feel that – not that I'm a boy, I feel like I can kick it with the guys but also wear stuff like this and it doesn't really matter. They never, "Go make me a sandwich." They never do that to me. I don't think it's important in that sense. I especially think that with today, men and women do a lot of the same things. It's a no. I mean – I'm proud to be a woman.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 3: Emily**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. Participant identification number is 1.2.26. The date is February 22, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First question, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I would say that I'm tall, normal body weight – maybe a little bit above what most people would think.
- Interviewer:* If you had to describe yourself to a blind date or someone and they said, "How would I know you at the restaurant?" How would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* Describe myself physically or –
- Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.
- Interviewee:* Probably, again, tall. I would say about average on everything. Blonde hair, green eyes. Standard.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body weight?
- Interviewee:* I would say that most of them are very skinny.
- Interviewer:* Okay. In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yes, but it's never been anything super negative. I did have a doctor tell me that I was like two pounds overweight.
- Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* Insignificant. It just didn't feel – it's like no matter how smart I am or anything else, it doesn't matter.
- Interviewer:* Did you take any action after you heard those comments?
- Interviewee:* I've tried to work out at different times, but I do have a couple of different diseases that make it difficult to lose weight. So basically I've just kind of – being okay with how I am and trying to be healthy.
- Interviewer:* How's your family around food?
- Interviewee:* I'd say we're not the healthiest family, but we eat – we don't overindulge ourselves. My dad had a little bit of trouble with being overweight, but he

started exercising and really taking care of himself. So we've been doing better, eating wise.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Breakfast is just on your own. Lunch we're usually at work. I bring a lunch. My mom, I know, usually goes out to eat. Then, dinner, we try to all sit together.

*Interviewer:* So what do you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* Just our day and what's coming up next. What was stressful.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Maybe a few times a month. It's not –

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably with my girl friends.

*Interviewer:* And what's the general body shape of those girls?

*Interviewee:* My older high school friends were more of the skinny, boyish figure, but now, they're a little bit more, you know, pear, apple – whatever they call it.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Probably just in her room or whenever we're just hanging out.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations or do they?

*Interviewee:* I'd say it's about an even distribution.

*Interviewer:* What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably when I was out with my mom – we're out shopping and the lady had told me that I was very skinny and very pretty. It just made me think – everybody's not a Skinny Minnie in high school.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably when one of my family members mentioned it just because I was snacking.

*Interviewer:* What did they say?

*Interviewee:* Just, "Do you really need to eat that?" and that kind of thing.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Not really anyone.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Do you identify with people of your similar body shape?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I do.

*Interviewer:* Yes. How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I would say it used to be pretty important, but now, not so much at all.

*Interviewer:* Why the change?

*Interviewee:* I think I just realized that it's more about being healthy and it's not worth stressing over trying to become a certain image if it's not possible.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a large amount of weight – like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Not that I can remember.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right. How would you describe weight in your family? Is it an important factor?

*Interviewee:* No, it's not important. I think my parents have always stressed, you know, just being healthy. There's a lot of issues that could be resolved by maintaining a healthy weight.

*Interviewer:* Is it talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* I think when my parents – there's a history of colon cancer, so when we get tested for those type of things, it comes up. Just at doctors visits and that type of thing.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight?

*Interviewee:* Like immediate family?

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone underweight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* All right. Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* What types of situations are you self-conscious about your weight in?

*Interviewee:* Probably when I'm around a lot of other tinier females.

*Interviewer:* What makes you feel that way?

*Interviewee:* I feel that they meet a society standard and I don't.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after these situations?

*Interviewee:* Not usually.

*Interviewer:* And then switching gears here, are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Very minor, in some cases.

*Interviewer:* What would be a situation in which you'd feel that way?

*Interviewee:* I'm a science major, so a lot of times people don't think that the girls can figure it out as well. It's minor – I don't feel it as much as I think I would have if I was born 50 years ago.

*Interviewer:* What made you feel – does anyone say anything or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* Just that I'm smart and it's not typically a female trait, but it's good. But it's just something different.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay.

*[End of Audio]*



#### **Overweight and Obese Participant 4: Sherrie**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. The participant identification number is 1.2.33. The date is February 23, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First question, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I would say that, for the most part, I'm healthy, but I would still like to lose some weight and be more in shape. But I'd say that I feel like I'm able – I'm not limited to do anything by my body shape.
- Interviewer:* Okay. So if you were describing yourself to a blind date and you said, "This is how you'll know me," what would you say?
- Interviewee:* I would say, "I'm short, about 5'2", and I have long hair and I'm not really skinny, but I'm not really fat either." I don't know.
- Interviewer:* That's fine. So how would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* I'd say normal for the most part. Normal, healthy sizes.
- Interviewer:* Okay. Bigger than you? Smaller than you?
- Interviewee:* Some I would say are – probably most of my closest friends are a little smaller than me, but they're some that are about the same size.
- Interviewer:* Okay. In the past, has anyone ever commented on your weight?
- Interviewee:* I remember when I was in second or third grade – someone called me a fatty, but I was kind of offended, but it was just kind of the type of guy too who'd just say something rude like that. That didn't really get me too much. But not too much, no.
- Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?
- Interviewee:* It made me feel sad, I guess. I don't know if I'd say offended – I don't know. It was a long time ago, so I don't remember. But I remember it kind of woke me up a little bit.
- Interviewer:* So did you take any action after that?
- Interviewee:* I don't think so. I was in like second or third grade.
- Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* I just went home this past weekend and it's always hard when I go home because my mom makes good food and stuff. We definitely like to eat and we like to snack and such, but my dad's also a PE teacher, so he's also – he really enjoys snacking and going out to eat and stuff, but he also likes to make sure that we do physical activity too.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* No, we did have some when I was younger, but not so much anymore. I remember when I was younger, we could only have one pop a day, if even that. If we'd go camping or something, they'd be a little more lenient. We didn't have any set rules, but just in general, if I wanted to do something, I'd ask my mom and she would say no or something like that.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* We eat them together at the table. Occasionally if there's a game or something, we'd sit in the living room, but usually it was always together.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What do you discuss?

*Interviewee:* Talk about our day a lot of times. When I was in high school, a lot of times I would just talk about – like maybe if I did really well on an assignment or something like that.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* With my friends and stuff, maybe a couple times a day. It depends – I have a friend that we go running a lot, so sometimes I'll talk about that. Or I'll mention to my roommate – she'll be like, "You're working out a lot." I'm like, "I want to lose weight," or something like that.

*Interviewer:* So what's the general body shape of these people?

*Interviewee:* I would just say normal sized. They're definitely healthy, I guess. Not necessarily too consumed with it, but they want to make sure they're healthy.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* In our room mostly.

*Interviewer:* And do you initiate these conversations or do they?

*Interviewee:* Probably mostly me – or it's easy for me to integrate that with what we're talking about.

*Interviewer:* Right. What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. Probably – last semester, I lost 15 pounds, so probably when I was home visiting and people would be like, "Wow, have you lost weight?" That's probably pretty good and it's nice of people to say that.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I don't really recall one. Maybe just – I came back from Christmas break and I was like, "I feel like I gained all my weight back." That type of stuff, but not really too bad.

*Interviewer:* Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Guys and a little bit my dad.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I would say so, yeah.

*Interviewer:* And how important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* Probably pretty important. A lot of times I'll think I'm pretty, but I don't necessarily – since I feel a little more overweight than I'd like to, then I feel like, "No guy's ever going to like me," or whatever. More important than it should be probably.

*Interviewer:* You said you lost 15 pounds last semester. Why'd you lose 15 pounds?

*Interviewee:* I live in a scholarship hall and so we cook our own food, so it's a lot healthier than, for example, dorm food. Also, I live on the second floor and our kitchens are all the way in the basement, so then if I want to get food, then I have to go all the way down there, whereas at home, we have a common room – the living room and the kitchen are kind of combined – so I walk through the kitchen all the time, so it's a lot easier just to grab something. Also, just probably walking to class because – since I live really close to campus, I don't ever take the bus, so I just walk everywhere pretty much.

*Interviewer:* How'd you feel before you lost the weight?

*Interviewee:* I always felt like I should go work out and stuff – and I would, but I didn't ever really find any results and if I did, it was just a few pounds here and there. But I felt like it was actually possible – I actually was finally kind of

feeling more comfortable in my own skin. I had always tried to lose weight before – not necessarily intensely, but it just never happened.

*Interviewer:* So did you make an effort to lose this weight or did it just kind of happen?

*Interviewee:* A little bit, but it mostly just happened, I would say. It wasn't like I was going to the gym every day and starting a completely new eating habit.

*Interviewer:* Right. How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* I felt really good. I was kind of stunned.

*Interviewer:* Stunned about what?

*Interviewee:* Just stunned that I had lost weight. I was hoping that I would when I came to college just because I knew that I would be preparing my own meals pretty much and be in control over that. I felt accomplished, I guess.

*Interviewer:* Good. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Just the issue of weight or like how my family –

*Interviewer:* Sort of both.

*Interviewee:* Okay. My mom – probably for the past few years – she's been trying to lose weight, but she's not bigger, it's just when you get older, you gain it. So she gets kind of disgusted with that and so it's easy for us to kind of both, I guess talk about our struggles with that. But I wouldn't say that my family's overly concerned with it, mostly just my mom and my dad, but not necessarily weight, it's more being fit and healthy.

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* I'd say it's talked about with my mom and I especially and occasionally – when I went home for Thanksgiving, some people commented that I had lost weight, so I guess a little bit, but not a lot.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* I would say that – I have a brother, he is 23 and he's really tall, but I don't know if I'd say he's overweight, but he's a little bigger but he's also just really tall. I don't know really how to gauge that, but I wouldn't say anyone's obese.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anything said about him?

*Interviewee:* Not really because, like I said, he's active and he's fully capable of doing everything also.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So is he treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* Mm-mmm.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* All the time.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe a situation in which you're self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Probably when maybe I'm with my friends – like the ones that are smaller – and we're around a bunch of guys and then I'm like, "They're all looking at her." Not necessarily that I notice that they pay attention to her, but it's easy for me just to go to that because she's small.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And now, switching gears – are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* I'm sorry, can you explain that?

*Interviewer:* Yeah. A situation in which you walk in and you're like, "Wow, I really know I'm a girl here."

*Interviewee:* Okay. Sometimes – last semester after a football game, I went to one of my friend's apartments and we hung out and they were the only – I was the only girl. There were other girls who came, but then I ended up being the only girl. They were still like, "We're glad you're here" and stuff like that, but I could definitely tell that I was the only girl.

*Interviewer:* Okay.  
*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 5: Amanda**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. Participant identification number is 1.2.34. The date is February 23, 2011 and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. First, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Characteristics like short?
- Interviewer:* Yeah.
- Interviewee:* I think I'm pretty short. I wouldn't say fat necessarily, but chubby. A little bigger than I'd like to be. I think my height probably has something to do with that. My little brother says I have the height of a small child.
- Interviewer:* How tall are you?
- Interviewee:* I'm like 5'4" barely.
- Interviewer:* You're average.
- Interviewee:* He's just a lot taller.
- Interviewer:* So if you were meeting a blind date at a restaurant and you were like, "This is how you'll know it's me," how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* That I'm blonde and I have green eyes and I'd probably describe something I'd be wearing.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* They're average. It's not like their in phenomenal shape, but they're normal.
- Interviewer:* Are they the same size as you or –
- Interviewee:* Some of them are the same size. Some of them are a little more fit. A lot of them are shorter. I don't know how that happens.
- Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yeah. I used to be a little heavier and it wasn't really negative, but my mom was like, "You might need to eat a little better." I think most of the time it's me criticizing myself more than other people commenting.
- Interviewer:* How did these comments make you feel?

*Interviewee:* Pretty self-conscious. I'm very self-critical and it just – I already know it and I pretty much down myself about it every day. My friends are really good about complimenting me because they know I'm very self-criticizing. So I don't get a lot of negative comments.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action after you heard these comments?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I've been eating more healthy. I started last year when I moved to college, so it was a little easier. I started eating healthier. I did a little unhealthy for a while, but I've started trying to take the stairs instead of the elevator, something like that.

*Interviewer:* How's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* They love it. My dad loves cooking and my mom – she does random health kicks at random times. One time, we had natural pasta – it was horrible. So she'll do random things like that.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* Not really. When we were little, my mom used to cook a lot, but now we eat – when I'm at home, that is – but now me and my brother are now both grown so most of the time I'm here and John's at basketball, so we eat out a lot and we get take out or just leftovers. So it's just kind of, "You eat when you can eat." We hardly ever eat together.

*Interviewer:* Okay. So you used to eat your meals together, but now not so much.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, when I was in high school, but then when we started – we both got jobs and my mom works nights, so we were never all in the same place at the same time.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I've been trying to cut back. It is something me and my roommate just talked about. She is like, "You spend too much time in front of the mirror just looking at yourself." It is something that I have been a little preoccupied with and something I think about a lot.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* My roommate is my best friend, so she hears a lot it, and my little brother, sometimes, because he used to be a little pudgy and then he got lucky and had a really big growth spurt. Me and my brother were like, "We going to

stop drinking caffeine." We do stuff like that and I'm like, "He'll start it again."

*Interviewer:* What are the general body shapes of the people you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* I think of myself as pear shaped. My roommate is more apple shaped, but she has no butt whatsoever. I talk about it with my mom and my mom is pretty much the same shape as I do – we have the exact same thighs. Then, my little brother, he just shot up, so he's still – he's husky and he's not even pudgy anymore.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Normally in the morning in my dorm room when I'm getting dressed in front of the mirror.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes – I'll ask my roommate, "Is this shirt a little too tight?" or "Are these pants just a little too low." Most of the time it has to do with how I'm going to look for the day. I can't tell if my jeans are too tight or something like that.

*Interviewer:* What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Just last night, I saw one of my friends from last year and she was like, "You're looking skinny, have you been working out?" I was like, "I try to between work and all these classes I'm taking." Last year, I think about the time I went home for Christmas break and I had been dieting and working out and people were like, "You look really good." Two other girls from my high school came into where I was working during Christmas and they're like, "What are you doing?" and I told them what I was doing and one girl has been texting me and asking questions like, "Did you eat this when you were on your diet?" I like the people who noticed when it changed, because I was fairly larger in high school.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What's the worst conversation you've ever had?

*Interviewee:* Definitely my calves. Boots – they don't like to fit in them. It's something that my roommate – hers are the same thing. It's just finding – I don't remember what store we were in, but we were just trying on so many pairs of boots and none of them looked right and none of them looked like they look on other girls and it was just depressing that I couldn't find a pair of boots that would fit around my calves.



*Interviewer:* So what did you all say?

*Interviewee:* I actually work out when I can and I was like – my roommate's sister is just tiny – and we were like, "It would be nice to have a high metabolism like Jessie does," because she eats like a baby dinosaur and she's just tiny. My little brother likes to tease me about my cankles and it's just my calves in general are just – and it's not like there's a lot of fat, there's a lot of –

*Interviewer:* Muscle.

*Interviewee:* It's hard. It's just the way I was built.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* People I don't know. I really had to think about this interview because I know I'm really insecure about it, so sometimes it is harder for me to talk about it. I was like, "I'll just be a \_\_\_\_\_." I did some studies last year – there's no reason for me to hate myself. My roommate, she hears a lot of it, and my really close friends. A couple of my cousins are – they were blessed with high metabolism also and they're all really active, but he will be like, "You look good today." He's really good about, "Your hair looks nice." He doesn't even realize it and I'm like, "Gosh, I wish I had your genes." It just takes me a little bit to kind of be comfortable enough with somebody to talk about it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Well, thank you for coming in. You're helping me a lot. Do you identify with people who have the same shape as you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I guess so because me and my roommate look oddly alike and we've been best friends since high school. There's one kid on our floor that still calls me her name. We worked at the same place and people would come in and be like, "Sisters working at the same Subway." I guess that I'm kind of drawn to people that look more like me. But then another one of my friends, she's five foot even and tiny. I guess she's the exception. But I think that in general I feel more comfortable when I'm not with someone that's 110 pounds.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* My roommate was like, "Doing this might be good for you."

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I'd almost say that the curves kind of make me because I'm pretty talkative and I like to be social and I don't think I necessarily stand out, but I've finally gotten to where I'm getting comfortable with it because I

was real quiet and real shy in high school and I don't know if it was college or what, but I'm starting to get more comfortable and more outgoing, and I think – the curves and everything kind of add to it. I think it makes my personality almost a little bigger and I think that's what I like about it, I think.

*Interviewer:* Good. So you've mentioned you've lost weight in the past. Have you ever lost more than ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* Oh, yeah. It's a big difference since when I was in high school.

*Interviewer:* How much have you lost?

*Interviewee:* Probably, I'd say 30 to – there was a while where I'd lost 50, but I gained a little back, so I started trying to do it a little healthier.

*Interviewer:* We'll count the higher number.

*Interviewee:* I was getting ready for summer and I just work out and I studied for my finals on the treadmill. My face has thinned out a lot and that's really my favorite part. The pictures of me in high school, it's right here – is really much bigger than it is now.

*Interviewer:* So when did you lose this weight?

*Interviewee:* When I moved into the dorm.

*Interviewer:* So last year?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, last year. I didn't like the food. I had nothing else to do. I'm not from around here, so it's not like I knew a lot of people, so I would go to the rec and then another girl I met was going to Hawaii for Christmas and she wanted to lose a couple pounds, so she'd go to the rec with me.

*Interviewer:* That's good. So was it primarily through exercise or were you following a certain diet?

*Interviewee:* I would say I dieted very unhealthily. I would eat one meal a day, which is – I took a health class and I learned I was doing it all wrong. But I would try to eat – not fried chicken, instead of eat \_\_\_\_\_. Stuff like that. I tried to eat simple things, which made it smaller.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. That's a good way to go about it. Why did you lose the weight? Why did you want to?

*Interviewee:* At first it was the change in environment. It kind of gave me something to do. I don't know. I was just tired of – I felt like I was – I didn't want the Freshman 15 and I just felt like I kept getting bigger and I was like, "God, it would be really nice to just buy a smaller pair of jeans." So I just wanted to feel better about myself.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* I didn't notice, I think, how big I was getting and I don't know if it was maybe the stress of high school. Then, I worked at a restaurant and I don't think that that helped any. So I just don't think I realized how much I was eating until – I don't think I eat half as much as I did.

*Interviewer:* So how do you feel after?

*Interviewee:* I feel a lot better. I feel like I have more energy. I know that sounds kind of cheesy, but I do feel like I have more energy. Last year, walking around campus – it killed me the first couple of weeks with these hills. I started just walking more because I hated waiting for the bus because I lived in a small town, so I drove everywhere – there was no walking anywhere because it was three miles away. I just got tired of waiting for the bus because I live in Oliver and no busses go there ever, so I would just start walking to class. For the first couple of weeks, I was like wheezing by the time I got home and it just started getting easier and then it was like, "I walked this long, why not?" I continued to walk to class and it was more of the small life changes, I think, that made the difference.

*Interviewer:* Good. How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* We're a big family. We're not huge by any means. I am by far the shortest. My girl cousin is 5'10" so there is some of us that are very fit. Three of my cousins are both just tiny – they're not tiny – there are three girls and the rest are boys – but those three are all boys and they're rather fit and their dad runs marathons and stuff like that and he married my mom's sister. But then, my dad has diabetes and so he was big and then he got the diabetes and he lost a lot of weight because he stopped drinking caffeine and couldn't drink. He just had to start watching his food, which kind of affected my whole close family because then my mom had to change the way she would make stuff and a lot of things are sugar free now. My mom – she's a yo-yo dieter. But she's not obese by any means, but she's not tiny. Pictures of my mom when she was my age, she is tiny. Then, my mom's third sister, she's the tall one and her son is like 6'6" and he's really fit. He played basketball his whole life. Then, my brother is 6'3". We're all pretty athletic. I like playing sports, it's just never been – I don't know what's wrong with my genetics, but it never helped keep the weight off. We all just kind of – it fluctuates. There's some of us that are

pretty fit and then a lot of us that are just now getting into it. Another reason I started dieting is that one of my cousins is – I think she just didn't realize how she was eating and she hit 300 and it was kind of – I was like, "Gosh, I've got to change something or else I'm going to be that big and that tired all the time." So I think I just wanted to be a little healthier. And we're all trying to get healthier now.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So is weight an important factor in your family?

*Interviewee:* I wouldn't say that it's not something that my parents emphasize. When I was little, it's not something that my mom was like, "You have to eat like this because you have to be this certain way" and stuff like that. But it was – I want to say probably around the time I'd gotten into eighth grade and my mom kind of hit a health kick and so she started being like, "We might need to all start eating a little healthier." So I think, even just recently, we've all tried to be just healthier in general and not for the weight aspect, but because my dad does have diabetes and my mom's had cancer and stuff like that. And one of my cousin's got a heart murmur, so everyone's just kind of been like, "We need to do this for our health." And my parents are not young parents. My dad's turning 55 and so we're like, "It's about time we started watching ourselves."

*Interviewer:* So do you talk about weight a lot in your family?

*Interviewee:* Occasionally. One of my aunts is really good about – when I go home she's like, "Have you been working out? You look better." When we went Black Friday shopping, she's like, "This dress looks really good on you. I want to buy it for you. You're getting a nice little figure." I love it when she does stuff like that. But my mom, I'll be like – I'm really bad about, "Mom, do I look a little tinier? Have I lost anymore weight?" My mom, she's a really good support system. She's like, "You look great however you are."

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family obese?

*Interviewee:* My sister – she has OCD and she, I would say, is – I'm just making a guess that she's near 400 pounds. It's not something I understand, I don't understand OCD and I don't know if that has anything to do with it. She is amazingly unhealthy. When I'm home, I make her go on walks with me and stuff like that. I'll walk to her house and go get her. But she, I think, would be the only – I don't know, the BMI is really off. In my health class yesterday, according to my BMI, I am obese, but in my science class they stress, "That's really inaccurate." I was like, "Thank goodness." But I'd say that she is the only one that I can think of that is obese. There's some of us that are a little chubby, but she might just be the rest of our \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said about her?

*Interviewee:* My aunt is a doctor and she is very concerned about the weight and so she has been like, "Heather, something has got to change. You can't eat all frozen pizza. You just eat three slices – if that." There has been – not just because she's – we're more concerned that she's going to have a heart attack or something – it's not something that she doesn't look good. We're concerned about her health in general. We're like, "Heather, you need to eat a salad. You need to maybe buy a little healthier foods. You can still eat some stuff that you love, but three two-liters of diet Dr Pepper a week is not good." It's been something that – we're not mean about it in anyway, but it's something that we're just trying to help her to know how to do it right. She's a lot older than me. She's probably like 27. My mom started working nights when I was probably like in seventh grade. My sister was in high school then, so she had home cooked meals most of her life. Me and my brother are younger and so we had – my mom started making healthy and so when Heather moved out on her own, she just ate really unhealthily and it just finally added up.

*Interviewer:* Is she treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* When we went Black Friday shopping, we knew she didn't want to go. She didn't want to walk around the mall. There's just like – when we go canoeing, we know she doesn't want to go canoeing. We'll ask anyway, but I was like, "Heather doesn't want to go on any canoe trip." I hardly want to go because it's just too hot. If she wants to go somewhere, we take her with us and we invite her when we go places and stuff like that. But there's just a lot of things that – she's asleep or it's too much walking. But we try to get her to anyway – just get her to walk.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. I tease my cousin Andrew because he's probably 145 pounds. But, again, he eats like amazingly a lot. But I guess it's just his make-up, but I don't think he's underweight. He's really like 5'10" and 145, 150, and I'd say he's little but I don't think he's underweight. One of my little cousins, she's 56 pounds and she is six years old. I'm just not sure she's ever getting any bigger. She's going to be three feet forever.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* All the time.

*Interviewer:* What is a situation in which you'd be self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* When I put on my jeans – this little muffin top right here, it really bothers me. And when I wear shorts, I feel like my cellulite is just huge – like there's dents in there and I know that there is not. I tan because I was telling my roommate, "Tan fat looks better than pale fat." So I will not wear shorts if I'm not tan, because I think it kind of hides the cellulite. Halloween costume shopping is just the worst because those things run so small and I'm like, "Really? I have to wear 1X?" It's the worst. Mostly, it is – the thing I am most self-conscious about is my butt, and I know it's so silly, but my friends call me white chocolate because it is just so big and finding jeans is horrible. It is my least favorite thing to shop for – and skirts because they're plenty long in the front and then in the back, you can see my ass. I'm not sure if I can say that. But it's really frustrating.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after a shopping experience?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I probably go to the gym longer than normal because I'm like, "If I get one more pound, then maybe the jeans will fit a little bit better." And I purposely buy jeans too small as a goal. Then, normally something great happens and I'll find something that looks really good and then I feel a little better. But shopping is just a depressing activity.

*Interviewer:* So now, kind of switching gears, are there ever situations in which you feel that your gender as a female is more important than other aspects of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Like in relation to weight or just –

*Interviewer:* No, just in general.

*Interviewee:* No, I don't see a big difference in gender. I think it was because my family's primarily boys, so having – because my sister was a lot older, so me and my brother did most things together, so I looked like a boy until like my sophomore year in high school. I wore basketball shorts and a t-shirt every day. I don't see a – if he can do it, I can do it. My little cousin – I called her and asked her what she wanted for her birthday and there was a racecar Barbie and she goes, "Girls can't drive racecars." We had to have a long talk about that they are very capable of driving racecars.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### Overweight and Obese Participant 6: Abby

- Interviewer:* Starting the recording now. Participant identification number is 1.2.32. The date is February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is Milton's in the Union. So first question is how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Physically? As in, like, physical abilities?
- Interviewer:* As in like, your appearance?
- Interviewee:* Appearance. I personally downplay myself because I don't like to be, "Oh, I'm pretty" or whatever. I do not consider myself – I get reactions from other people, "Oh, don't be so hard on yourself." But I personally – I like my appearance but at the same time, I'm not gonna say, "Oh, I'm pretty" or anything like – yeah – of that sort. *[Laughter]*
- Interviewer:* Okay. So, if you were like, describing yourself to a blind date and saying, "This is how you'll know me." Like, what would you say?
- Interviewee:* Ooo. Well, I usually – that's a good question. As in physical appearance again? Well, I usually don't dress like other women – I mean, like, the whole – I don't like dressing fancy. I'd rather be in normal clothes and all that, but mine is more, I guess, conservative than others. I – especially with showing skin and stuff. I really don't like doing that at all.
- Interviewer:* What else would you say?
- Interviewee:* Of course I guess I would describe my features, like, yeah, I have brown hair – if you could see my eyes. And I'm Caucasian. I mean, the normal.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* Body shape? I have a wide variety of friends with body shape. My best friend, she's more of – she's got more of like, bigger in the hips – everything –
- Interviewer:* So, like a pear shape?
- Interviewee:* Yeah. The pear shape. But I personally – I'm not discriminatory in that, just because people's – I was brought up to look at people's personality rather than their features, 'cause they're completely different. You can't judge people like that.
- Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* So, but – all shapes and sizes: Tall, skinny, pear, overweights, what – I mean, that’s a loose term, but yeah.

*Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* No?

*Interviewee:* Uh uh.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right. How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* My family around food? Growing up?

*Interviewer:* Mhmm. Yeah, yeah.

*Interviewee:* And just all of?

*Interviewer:* Uh huh.

*Interviewee:* Okay. Well, we did a lot of home-cooked meals. And basically, it was you know, get a helping of everything and try to finish your plate, which, you know, is such a bad thing with all the nutrition information stuff coming available and – but now they’re more health conscious. Especially – I guess my mom has diabetes now, which can be controlled by food consumption. So, I know me and my fiancée, we have lately become more conscious of eating right, eating a lot more fruits and vegetables. And it’s amazing how you feel when you actually eat right.

*Interviewer:* I know. It’s like, darn that.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* So, when you were younger, did your family have any rules about food? So like, you couldn’t eat after certain times or you couldn’t eat certain types of food, or?

*Interviewee:* They didn’t like us eating after eight, but sometimes they bent rules. But, yeah, they would always say, “Oh, you can’t have the snack” or you know, “You need to eat your food.” Especially with my brother - his vegetables – that type of thing. And I was – I was sort of opposite. I liked the vegetables rather than the meat.

*Interviewer:* So, you all had like family dinners when you were younger?



*Interviewee:* Oh yes.

*Interviewer:* And like, what would you –

*Interviewee:* We had it at the table –

*Interviewer:* Okay, good.

*Interviewee:* Every night.

*Interviewer:* What would you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* Sometimes the day or if we learned something new, or just different interests, I guess. I really miss it, actually because it seems like our society has went away from the whole family connection there. But it would mainly be about out day.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* More lately. I've started realizing, oh, I am getting overweight. I notice it in my body and stuff. So I have been mentioning it a lot lately. When I was underweight – I had mentioned in the survey that I was underweight and – I would talk about it a little bit but it was more of a concern of, I need to do something about this. And it's amazing that stress and worrying can put you underweight. So I would, hey. And it was more towards my parents and stuff – I need to go to the doctor and see what we can do about this.

But – or, I would just make the comment, "I feel like a shriveled prune." So, but more lately, it's like, "Oh my goodness. I can't believe the changes and stuff. And I need to do something about this."

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Really, I mainly talk with my fiancée about it. My parents – I'm from North Carolina so it's not so much of a thing. I will talk about health things sometimes, but – if people ask me, I'm, you know – I'm not gonna say, "Oh, well, I'm not gonna tell you my weight." It's – I don't understand that one. But it shouldn't really, technically matter I guess. But, I'm pretty straightforward with anybody who wants to discuss that.

*Interviewer:* What are the general body shapes? Like what's the general body shape of your fiancée?

*Interviewee:* What is it called? It's like more that – is there such a thing as an apple or something? Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Mhmm. Okay.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* Wherever.

*Interviewer:* Okay. And do you initiate them, or does he?

*Interviewee:* I'm usually the one complaining about it, but he also brings up the weight because he is overweight. So, it's at both ends, really. But it depends who we're talking about and, "Okay, how are we going to remedy this?"

*Interviewer:* Yeah, right. What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* The best conversation. I – let's see. I guess – I really don't know. I mean, I've had several but they're not really of big concern, so.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What's the worst?

*Interviewee:* I've –

*Interviewer:* You don't know?

*Interviewee:* I mean – really, I don't consider then best or worst, they're just a conversation topic.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I mean, I guess you could say the best is like, with the doctor. Oh, when I was underweight – like – "Oh, thank you! You're gonna help me." But yeah. No, I haven't really.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* You know, I'll talk with strangers, but I'm a little nervous when I do. But then again, you know, if they don't like what they hear, well, then, why did they ask?

*Interviewer:* Right. Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I almost feel like, I don't consider myself – oh, I'm part of this group. I mean, we're humans. I really don't look at shape that way. So, I mean I guess I could but there's all – there's all sorts of shapes out there, so.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* To who I am?

*Interviewer:* Mhmm.

*Interviewee:* I'm noticing, especially getting a little overweight that it's starting to take hold of like, oh, well – the whole concern thing. But really, I – I mean, I'll look in my mirror, especially when I dress up nice, and like, oh. Or the pants don't fit that used to or – and it will concern me, but it's like, oh well, you know. It's not a major concern, not yet anyway.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost a significant amount of weight, like over ten pounds?

*Interviewee:* I'd say when I was underweight. I was holding 125 and I guess the worrying of high school and stress – I went down to 115.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I think that's the last time I lost ten pounds.

*Interviewer:* And it was just the stress?

*Interviewee:* The stress and worrying. It doesn't quite work that way anymore. It seems opposite. I want to eat more when I stress and worry.

*Interviewer:* So, how did you feel before you lost that weight?

*Interviewee:* I felt fine and physically active, and – well – as far as mentally, I had stress and worry because I actually – it throws me into depression and everything, so.

*Interviewer:* So, afterwards, I'm guessing you didn't feel very good?

*Interviewee:* No. Well, once I gained back the ten pounds, I felt great again. Then I was actually happy and thankful. But when I lost it, a lot of worry and concern then came in and yeah. It was sort of like, what am I doing wrong?

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Well, my mom – especially my mom's side of the family, the females always get overweight. It seems. My dad's side of the family – he was

always skinny. He's just now starting to show a little bit of – so, they – and then my brother, he's starting to gain weight 'cause he eats out all the time. But he's always been skinny and – so it's sort of interesting. I guess my mom and her side is overweight and skinny on my dad's.

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* We'll joke about it, sort of like, oh – I don't know. We like picking on each other's – also, with the dinner conversations we always pick around with each other, so. But I mean, it's not to the extent of we're gonna hurt someone's feelings or anything.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Underweight. No. Mmm mmm.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Describe a situation in which you're self-conscious about your weight.

*Interviewee:* When I dress up. I'm not used to the formal situations because I'm more relaxed or whatever. And so, when I have to dress up I'm not used to it. And then I start noticing all these different things like, oh, look at my weight. More of like, oh, it's starting to get a tummy or whatever. And it's really uncomfortable and I freak out. And then my fiancée has to calm me down and then I'm worried about my looks for the whole night.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action after these – after that?

*Interviewee:* What – can you describe that?

*Interviewer:* Like, you change your eating habits, or you exercise more, or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* No. Mmm mmm. I think it's just the whole situation of, oh, I have to dress up and almost try to impress people.

*Interviewer:* Right. And then, switching gears, are there ever situations in which you feel your identity as a female is the most – is most important? So, are there situations in which you think – you really feel like, oh, yeah, I really know I'm a girl in this situation?

*Interviewee:* Really feel like I'm a girl in this situation. Like, can you repeat that? I'm sorry.

*Interviewer:* Sure. Are there situations in which you feel your gender is made more important than other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* I guess. I don't know if this is exactly what you want, but there are some times, especially in the summer when I'm like, wearing a dress or a skirt and so I grew up as a tomboy and I still identify with that, but I notice as I've gotten older I do look to put on dressed, where I used to hate it. And so, I do like to be girly every so often, but it's just sort of random, to tell you the truth.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I never used to like wearing high heels, but there is some times that, you know, I have a comfortable pair of high heel sandals that I'll wear or something, so.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 7: Mary**

- Interviewer:* Okay. I'm starting the recording now. The participant identification number is 1 dot 2 dot 24. The date is February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And the location is 117 Bailey Hall. All right. So, first question: How would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I am very tall – six feet tall. I am busty. I am – tend to carry all my weight in my mid-section and I have very skinny legs with small feet.
- Interviewer:* Really? Small feet?
- Interviewee:* Yeah, for my size I have very small feet.
- Interviewer:* Yeah, what size are your shoes?
- Interviewee:* Nine.
- Interviewer:* Really? 'Cause I'm 5'11" and I wear a 12. So I'm pretty jealous of you right now.
- Interviewee:* Yeah, very small feet for my size.
- Interviewer:* So, if someone were – like, if you were going out on a blind date and they said, like, how would I know you? Like, how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I would be the tallest girl in the room with the bright red glasses.
- Interviewer:* That's a good description.
- Interviewee:* Long, brown hair because it's not as long as it was, but okay.
- Interviewer:* [Laughter] How would you physically describe your friends, in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* They are all short. They are all short and they are all very thin. I don't know how that happened. I don't have any friends who are over weight. I don't know how that happened, either.
- Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Yes. What was said?

*Interviewee:* Mostly, it was in high school. And it was fat ass, I think, was the big one. And then I grew to be six feet and they stopped talking about me, so.

*Interviewer:* So who was it that said these things?

*Interviewee:* It was mainly one boy named Frank. He was a popular guy, so. He started it and then it kind of went around.

*Interviewer:* How did it make you feel?

*Interviewee:* Terrible.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any action after they called you this?

*Interviewee:* One – the last time he ever called me I kind of punched him in the nose. And I don't think I broke it, but it was definitely bleeding.

*Interviewer:* Oh no.

*Interviewee:* That's when people stopped talking about me.

*Interviewer:* That will do it. *[Laughter]* You know, one time, in high school, I was singing *Build Me Up Buttercup* and I was like – I was trying to do the big finish and so I was like, "Build" and I just hear my hand hit something. And I like, accidentally, like, knocked out our state wrestling champ. And all of a sudden I just looked and he was on the floor. And I was like –

*Interviewee:* Oops.

*Interviewer:* I know, so there you go. So, how's your family around food?

*Interviewee:* Well, really the only time – it kind of depends. My parents don't eat a lot. My mom doesn't eat a lot because she's on a plethora of drugs and she has lupus, so her appetite varies. My dad doesn't eat because he has really bad ADD and he forgets to and when he does, it's usually just ice cream and cake. But he's also very skinny. I don't think my brothers eat very much either. My husband and I eat probably the most of anyone in the family. But the only time we really get together – all together – is for food-based holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving and things like that.

*Interviewer:* So, when you were younger, did your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* Yes. I had to eat Brussels sprouts. I had to finish everything that was on my plate and if I didn't, I couldn't go to bed. Other than that, not really.

*Interviewer:* Did – how does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* Well, when I was kid, we used to eat them together at the dinner table, and then when we moved from one house to another it changed because my mother started working a lot more and it was pretty much just whenever you can eat, whatever you can.

*Interviewer:* So what would you all talk about when you did eat together?

*Interviewee:* Oh, I – it’s been so long, it’s hard to remember, exactly. I remember my mom and dad would talk about their days. And they would ask me how school went. And then inevitably, I would complain about eating the Brussels sprouts.

*Interviewer:* She had them at every meal?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Or like – really?

*Interviewee:* Every dinner. My mom said they would make me grow big and strong. And I said, “I don’t want to grow up big and strong.” And then, inevitably, I would try feeding them to the dog, and the dog wouldn’t eat them, so I would shove them in my sock and pretend I ate them, then dump them out my window.

*Interviewer:* Did your parents ever discover a giant, like –

*Interviewee:* Nope.

*Interviewer:* Pile of Brussels sprouts?

*Interviewee:* Nope. ‘Cause I would go out when I would play and then I’d go out behind the bushes and spread them around.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* Cover my tracks.

*Interviewer:* So often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Oh, I don’t know. It depends on who I’m with. I would say, often with my husband. He’s also overweight. With my friends, occasionally and they go, “No, you’re not fat.” Dah dah dah. But that’s about it. With my mom, on occasion.

*Interviewer:* So like, where do you have these conversations?



*Interviewee:* Usually, at my house, at my mom's house, and that's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Not in public, usually.

*Interviewer:* What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, there was a time when I got down to 200 and after I reached 16 I was pretty much 180 and up. And I – the biggest I ever got was 250 and I herniated a disc and I couldn't walk and like, it was just terrible. So I've been slowly losing weight. And I got down to 200 and then I bounced back up to 230, but when I was at 200 everybody was noticing and then saying, "Oh, you look so thin. Whatever you're doing, keep doing it." Like, "thanks."

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Then was when I was getting – that was when I was at 250 and I was trying wedding dresses on and none of them looked good on me and I thought I was just too fat for all of them. And then I ended up getting a dress that I didn't really like because it covered me. And my mom and I were talking about it and I started crying, and I said, "I don't want to be in this stupid dress." That was probably the worst conversation about it. I was crying in the actual dress store. Which I'm sure they're used to, but.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* This is how much?

*Interviewer:* With whom are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* My friends, especially since they're all skinny. They just don't get it because they don't have any problems with their weight. They're just naturally thin, most of them.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* I do. I don't know – I don't know how I don't have any more friends who are overweight. I have – my husband is overweight and his sister is overweight, and I love his sister. I don't know if I identify anymore with her than I do with any of my other friends because of the weight, but I don't know. That's hard to say.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* It's pretty important. I have – hypoglycemia.

*Interviewer:* Me, too.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, fun. And they're always like, "You're gonna get diabetes if you don't lose the weight."

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* And it's like, "Well, okay, I've been trying."

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It's not always that easy. So, it's extremely important.

*Interviewer:* So you said before you lost probably around like, 50 pounds. So when was that?

*Interviewee:* That was in 2005.

*Interviewer:* And why did you lose it? Because of the disc?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, once my disc started getting better, they told me I needed to work on my core so that it would be stronger. And so I basically ended up exercising every day for 30 minutes and then I went on this crazy steak, cheese, and yogurt diet where I only ate steak, cheese, yogurt – oh, and cabbage. I don't know. It was a phase. I went through it. It helped me get down to 200 but it was –

*Interviewer:* Really?

*Interviewee:* It wasn't very fun.

*Interviewer:* Huh. I don't think I've ever heard of that one before.

*Interviewee:* No?

*Interviewer:* I've heard – either heard of or done most of them, so that's a new one.

*Interviewee:* It worked. I was happy with it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So, was it like, Atkins?

*Interviewee:* I guess – I didn't mean for it to be, but.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I go through phases with food where I find something I like and I eat that for two weeks, and then I get sick of it, and then I find something else that I like, and that – that steak, cheese, yogurt, cabbage phase lasted a long, long time.

*Interviewer:* So, did you eat any bread? Like, no – that was just what you ate – steak, cheese, yogurt, cabbage?

*Interviewee:* Mhmm.

*Interviewer:* No other vegetables? Like no – no Brussels sprouts?

*Interviewee:* No, definitely not.

*Interviewer:* So, how did you feel before you lost the weight?

*Interviewee:* Terrible. I didn't like going out in public because I thought people would make fun of me and I couldn't fit into any of my clothes without going like this all the time, you know, trying to cover the muffin top and the rolls. And I still do that. That's pretty terrible.

*Interviewer:* Every 15 minutes. Or, even, I mean, you've been here for what? Like, six minutes and they've done it like, ten times? How would you feel after?

*Interviewee:* How did I feel when – oh.

*Interviewer:* After you lost the weight.

*Interviewee:* I felt awesome. It's kinda silly, but I felt free, like I can do anything I want now. I couldn't – I wouldn't go out on the beach or anything – I mean, I wasn't in beach body condition or anything, but I would definitely go out and hang out with our friends more, and go out places and go to the zoo, and do exercise-y things and stuff like that. But then, when I started back here, stress kind of got to me and I gained 30 more pounds, so.

*Interviewer:* So are you an undergrad or? Okay. What's your major?

*Interviewee:* Anthropology.

*Interviewer:* Oh, I took one anthropology class in college. This woman was nuts. She was from New Zealand and –

*Interviewee:* They usually are.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Most of the anthropology's department is a little nuts in some way, shape, or form.

*Interviewer:* So how would you describe weight in your family?

*Interviewee:* Well, it's funny. I don't know anything about my biological dad's side of the family. I only know about my mother's. And they all have problems with their weight. My mom is fluctuated. My aunt – my Uncle Mark is got an IQ of 70 and he also has autism, and all he wants to do is eat, so he'll sit in a dark – and he's also legally blind – so he'll sit in a dark room and eat, and eat, and eat until he throws up. It's like he doesn't know when to stop. And he lives with my parents, so they have to lock the fridge and stuff and only let him eat three times a day with snacks and you know. But it's hard, but.

*Interviewer:* Wow.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, everybody in our family – or everybody at least on my mom's side eats emotionally – emotional eating – stress eating, too.

*Interviewer:* I know – I'm writing this dissertation and I was like, "I think I've eaten every pastry in Lawrence." Like, you name it, I've been there. Just walk in, and be like, "Can I just get a dessert to go?" [Laughter]

*Interviewee:* Oh, I wish I could do that. I'd love to do that.

*Interviewer:* So, is weight talked about a lot in your family?

*Interviewee:* Yeah – mainly my mother and my husband's mother, they talk about our weight.

*Interviewer:* They talk about your all's weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, both mine and his. His especially because he had a father who died at 40 from a heart attack and my husband is probably a hundred pounds overweight and they're worried that, you know, since he's 30 now, he's only got 10 years left, or you know. So, we're constantly talking about weight and getting in shape, mainly just be to healthy, not to necessarily be thin again. But he talks about it a lot, too, 'cause he can't fit into the clothes he used to fit into and he's up into the three x's and stuff like that, so.

*Interviewer:* So, there are other people in your family who are overweight or obese? No?

*Interviewee:* Not really.

*Interviewer:* No? No?

*Interviewee:* I mean, aside from my uncle – he’s overweight; he’s not obese, because they watch him very carefully. His mother’s probably, technically, overweight but she’s definitely not obese. The only other person that would be his sister, and she’s definitely in the obese category. But no, everybody else in my family is relatively thin. I mean, my mom fluctuates but I blame that mostly on her disease and her meds, so.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* At the moment, my mom is, but as a general rule, no. Everybody has a pretty healthy weight, even my cousins. They’re thin, but they’re not underweight.

*Interviewer:* Right. Are you ever self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Aw, yes. All the time.

*Interviewer:* Can you describe, like a specific situation where you’re self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, when I – at school, here. When you sit in those desks that have the desk part that folds down and I’m the only one whose belly touches the thing. That’s pretty humiliating and I think about it constantly, and often I try not to use them but then I feel like I look like I’m trying to avoid it so that – it’s a kind of crazy, neurotic thing. But, like, that’s just one example. My husband and – my husband doesn’t like eating in booths anymore because he doesn’t want his belly to touch the booth table and – and things like that. Whenever I go out to eat dinner, I try to order something healthy and then I try to eat as little of it as possible. Sometimes I’m still hungry when I go home, which is stupid, but.

*Interviewer:* Why do you do that?

*Interviewee:* I don’t know. I don’t want other people to think that I’m, like, eating too much or “look at her, she’s eating way too much for her body size and she’s already fat, she doesn’t need to eat that.” That kind of thing.

*Interviewer:* All right, so kind of switching gears. Are there ever situations in which you feel that your gender as a female is more important – is like, the most important part of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Occasionally.

*Interviewer:* Like, what are those situations?

*Interviewee:* Well, I'm not your average girl. I don't dress, really, like a girl and I don't really – I mean, I wear some make-up but it's minimal and I like doing guy stuff. And so, when I'm out with my girlfriends, it's extremely important for me to be girly during that time because I feel like I don't get that any other time. So, I try to girl it up as much as possible 'cause most of my friends are guys. I only have a few girl friends, so when I'm with them I'm like – princess. Hopefully not to an annoying point, but.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] Okay.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 8: Sara**

- Interviewer:* Okay. This is participant identification number 1.2.17. The date is December 3rd, 2010, and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. To begin how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* I don't think I'm obese, but I do think I have some weight to lose.
- Interviewer:* If you were describing yourself to a blind date, and he or she is like, "How will I know you in the restaurant?", how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I'd say very tall, *[laughter]* dark brown hair, and average body I guess.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shape?
- Interviewee:* They're kind of all different, but my best friend is very, very skinny. She's really petite.
- Interviewer:* In your past has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.
- Interviewer:* What was said?
- Interviewee:* It was my mom, and she just said that she wanted me to be healthy.
- Interviewer:* How did that make you feel?
- Interviewee:* I was upset, but at the same time I knew it was true. It's kind of hard to hear the truth I guess.
- Interviewer:* Did you take any action afterwards?
- Interviewee:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* What did you do?
- Interviewee:* First I got mad, but then once I calmed down and we actually talked about it, I was understanding. She's coming from a loving place. It's not like she wants me to be skinny to be pretty. It's a health issue.
- Interviewer:* How is your family around food?
- Interviewee:* My mom's really good, and so are my brothers. One of them is an athlete, so he's kind of obsessed with it, but my dad is not good. *[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* When you say good, what do you mean by that?

*Interviewee:* My brother's really health conscious, and so is my mom, but my dad just eats whatever he wants.

*Interviewer:* Does your family have any rules about food?

*Interviewee:* No, not really.

*Interviewer:* So you could eat any time, or anything?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* My mom usually cooks, and we always make fun of her because probably five nights out of the week we have chicken. She has like 10 different recipes, but if we eat out then it's a little more unhealthy.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you eat together?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Do you eat together regularly?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I have two older brothers who don't live at home, but when we were younger we always ate together, and I always ate with my parents.

*Interviewer:* What did you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* My dad talks about work a lot, then I'll kind of talk about my day in school, or we'll talk about family.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* A lot probably.

*Interviewer:* Who do you talk about it with?

*Interviewee:* My mom.

*Interviewer:* What does she look like?

*Interviewee:* She's pretty skinny.



*Interviewer:* What do you talk about?

*Interviewee:* Just kind of how frustrating it is, especially being at college, that some girls can eat whatever they want, and I can't.

*Interviewer:* Where do you have these conversations?

*Interviewee:* On the phone.

*Interviewer:* Do you initiate them, or does she?

*Interviewee:* I usually do.

*Interviewer:* What's the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Actually it was probably a month ago, and I just realized I had put on a lot of weight coming from school, and I was talking to my mom and brother because they were in the car. I just kind of had a breakdown, and they were just telling me that I had to make a life change. I'm not like other girls. I can't eat whatever I want. I can't expect to be like them.

*Interviewer:* What's the worst conversation you've ever had?

*Interviewee:* In February my parents let me go on – I don't know if you've ever heard of Medifast.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* I did that, and I did really good. I lost 15 pounds, but then over the summer I gained it all back, and my mom told me that I wasted their money. It was really hard.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you're not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably my best friend just because she doesn't really understand, because she's one of those people that can usually eat whatever she wants and still be tiny.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people your shape, and like you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What do you think when you see people that way?

*Interviewee:* It doesn't make me happy that they're like that, but it gives me, I'm not the only one that struggles with this.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* It's pretty important to me.

*Interviewer:* You said you lost 15 pounds.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Is that the most you've ever lost?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* And that was last February?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Why did you decide to go on that diet?

*Interviewee:* Just because what I was doing on my own wasn't working, and I thought they could teach me how to be healthier in that way, but in the end I think it was kind of more crash diet, which doesn't work.

*Interviewer:* It's more liquid, isn't it?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. They have like meal bars, or shakes, and you drink five of those, then do a lean and green meal.

*Interviewer:* That would be pretty restricting. How did you feel before you lost the weight?

*Interviewee:* I wasn't very confident looking back. It just makes me mad because I was so much thinner then. I can't believe wasn't happy.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Really, really confident, but it was weird because I still wasn't happy with it. My goal was 30 pounds, and I had lost 15. I stayed at that for a long time. My mom kept telling me that that was probably my body telling me the weight I should be at, but being crazy me I just wanted to lose more.

*Interviewer:* What made you decide to go on the diet?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. My dad was doing it, and I saw a big difference in him. Plus, I had a lot of stuff coming up. I had graduation, and prom, and coming to college. Kind of big life changes.

*Interviewer:* How would you describe weight in your family? Is it important?

*Interviewee:* It's not like important like my mom's not disgusted that I have weight to lose. We just want everyone to be healthy.

*Interviewer:* Is it talked about in your family?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Like how often is it talked about?

*Interviewee:* I would say maybe twice a week.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* My dad is.

*Interviewer:* Is he overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* I would say he used to be obese, but after doing Medifast he's gained some of it back, so I would just say overweight now.

*Interviewer:* Did anyone say anything to him about it?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* What was said?

*Interviewee:* My mom always says to him, "If you want to walk Courtney down the aisle, you've got to change some things." He does have health problems and the doctors told him you have pre-diabetes.

*Interviewer:* Is he treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* No. He still eats what he wants right in front of us.

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. My brother is just because he's always been skinny his whole life.

*Interviewer:* Is anything said to him about his weight?

*Interviewee:* In high school friends would say stuff and it would really bother him, but no one in the family.

*Interviewer:* Is he treated any differently because he's underweight?

*Interviewee:* No, I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* When do you feel self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Usually whenever I'm going out because I want to wear really cute dresses and they don't always look as cute as they do in smaller sizes.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever take any action afterwards?

*Interviewee:* After?

*Interviewer:* You feel self-conscious about your weight.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Then whenever I see myself, I'm like, "I'm really going to get motivated tomorrow."

*Interviewer:* Kind of switching gears here. Is there ever a situation in which you're self-conscious about the fact that you're a female? Like, you walk in to a situation and you think, "Wow. I'm really aware that I'm a female here."

*Interviewee:* I don't really know what you mean.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Like when being a female is important to you, is there ever a situation when that occurs?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Going out, being self-conscious of my weight, I think, boys aren't going to be flocking to me.

*Interviewer:* All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 9: Amie**

- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording now. Participant identification number 1.2.02, and the date is December 3rd, 2010, and the location is 117 Bailey Hall. All right. So first off, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Physically, I would probably describe myself as not very healthy right now. I used to play a lot of sports in high school, middle school, and in just like the past half of my senior year, and summer in college, I've put on weight, so I'm not very – I don't feel very healthy right now because I'm used to being much more active.
- Interviewer:* What did you play?
- Interviewee:* I played soccer and I did track.
- Interviewer:* Really, lots of running. *[Laughter]*
- Interviewee:* Heavy running sports.
- Interviewer:* Endurance, definitely. I played basketball, so I always described it as being in basketball shape because it was always like sprint, stop, sprint, stop, whereas with soccer and things like that, it's just constant. You're always moving. If you were going on a blind date, and you were talking to the person on the phone, on the other end, and he or she said, "How will I know you in the restaurant?", how would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* I would probably tell him that I'm about average height. I have dark curly hair, Hispanic, and I'll probably look ridiculously nervous. I'll be that person that's looking around and you're like, "That's the one."
- [Laughter]*
- Interviewee:* The one that's like, "Am I supposed to be here? Is this the right place?" Just looking absolutely awkward. That's how I would describe myself.
- Interviewer:* How would you physically describe your closest friends in terms of their shape?
- Interviewee:* My best friend has like this perfect hourglass figure that just inspires envy every time you look at her, and for the most part most of my friends are pretty thin. A lot of them were pretty athletic in high school, and my best friend did cross country. One of my other friends is a gymnast, so around kind of those tiny girls.
- Interviewer:* In your past has anyone ever made a comment about your weight?

*Interviewee:* No one, like friends in school, no one has ever made a comment to me. In my family they have. My parents would always make comments because we were a very athletic family, so if I was starting to gain weight they would worry, or they would be like, "Hey. You need to get in shape for season." It was just kind of to try and motivate me to get going I guess. I guess the most comments I got were from my parents, or from younger siblings, like if you're in the middle of a really heated fight, they're like, "Let me just throw out this barb to insult her."

*Interviewer:* What would they say?

*Interviewee:* My mom would always just be like, "I think you're putting on a little weight, honey." She would try and be nice about it, but it was like, "Um, okay. Thanks mom. Did you have a good day?" My dad would be like – we'd go through pictures and he'd pull out, "Look. Come look. Here's your soccer picture. When are we going to see that girl again?" My dad was like the one guy that was trying to get you so mad at him that you would do something. That's how he would motivate us when he would train us. He'd be like, "I want you to be so angry at me that you're just going to play better."

*Interviewer:* Kind of like, do you watch *The Biggest Loser*?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Like that Jillian Michaels.

*Interviewee:* That's my dad.

*Interviewer:* Beating it in to them. "You will be healthy." [Laughter]

*Interviewee:* That's my father. Recently he's been better about it. I guess they realized instead of just trying to poke me in to it, they're like, it's got to be your thing. I do better when it's my thing, trying to get in to shape instead of them being like, "So, what did you eat today?" I'm like, "Um. I don't know. What did you eat today?"

*Interviewer:* How would it make you feel when they would say things like that?

*Interviewee:* I would get pretty defensive, and I think it was because I'm the oldest but I was one of the kids that struggled most with weight. I would be in shape through season, but I would always be little bit bigger than everyone else. I could do my sport, and I could get through the running and everything. I was always that person. I was highly competitive, and I was determined that I was not going to be the last person in sprints. I would push myself a lot harder, but I was always bigger than my younger sister who is like two

years younger, and my brothers who have these metabolisms that they eat something, then burn it off, then they're hungry again. They just don't gain anything, but they're eating entire pizzas by themselves. It was always just—

*Interviewer:* I know. My uncle has a coffee mug that says, "Some people can eat whatever they want and never gain weight." Then it says, "Let's go find one of those people and kill them." [Laughter]

*Interviewee:* It's that feeling.

*Interviewer:* Did you ever take any action regarding those comments?

*Interviewee:* A couple times I would maybe say something like, "That's my business." But I was a teenager. I didn't really talk to my parents. I'm one of the more reserved I guess in my family. My family is super sports-oriented. They're like explosion sports-oriented. They all did multiple sports, and I had like my two, then I was more in to the really artistic things. I would lock myself in my room and just turn on my music really loud and not listen to anybody when they really made me angry. I found like the angriest music I could find, and got really in to metal for a while. Like, "All right. I'm mad at you, and I'm going to make it incredibly obvious." I guess outright I didn't ever say anything to them. It was all more, "Let me rant for five pages in my journal." Go listen to music really loudly.

*Interviewer:* How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* They like food. They like it a lot. My dad actually used to get irritated because he would bring home cookies and with five kids, they were just instant, like, honing in on it, just demolished. That would always irritate my dad. My mom used to be in the army, so she has her glory days of fitness, then five kids, she put on weight. She was always every once in a while trying some new diet. There would be times when sugar just got nixed from the house. It was not allowed. You had to sneak it in. She would always try to get me and my dad to be in on it, or me and my sister to be in on it. She's like, "Let's do this new diet." It was always something new, something that's supposed to work.

*Interviewer:* Aside from like maybe no more sugar in the house and things like that, did you have any other food rules, like you couldn't eat at a certain time?

*Interviewee:* We didn't have a rule about it. It was just like, my parents would be like, "You don't need to be in the kitchen right now."

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* They would make a comment and just be like, "Stop eating." But it wasn't like a rule, rule.

*Interviewer:* How does your family enjoy your meals when you're all together? Are you like all over the place, or eating as a family at the table?

*Interviewee:* We're not like an "at the table" kind of family just because we never have time. My senior year was a really good example. I was really busy because my parents both worked an hour away, and I was the one. I had a car, so I would pick up all of the kids from school, and in between me getting off from school and getting out of track or soccer, I would have to go home and get a meal started, then I would leave to go to work. Kayla would finish the meal, then she had – my sister is Kayla. She would have to get everybody fed, then the boys would go to practices. My parents would come home. Everybody was eating at a different time.

*Interviewer:* Did you ever have family dinners?

*Interviewee:* Occasionally we did. It was like if we all happened to be there on the weekend, and my dad was like, "Let's order some pizza." or "Let's go out to eat." I think we didn't have a lot of sit-down dinners because there wasn't really time for it.

*Interviewer:* When you were together, what did you all talk about?

*Interviewee:* My mom was all about sharing the best and worst part of your day, go around the circle basically and say the best and worst part of your day. Just discussion would come out of maybe someone's best part of the day, so that would take up most of the meal.

*Interviewer:* How often do you talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Not often. I'm a little more private about it. I'm like, it's my thing to deal with, and I'll figure it out. A lot of my friends will be like, "I'm so fat. I put on five pounds." I'm like, "Okay, that's cool. I wouldn't tell anybody that, but alrighty."

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] So not really at all.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I'm not really that person who's like, "This is my weight. What do you think about it?" I'm the person who's like, "That's my business."

*Interviewer:* Describe one of the best conversations you've ever had about your weight.

*Interviewee:* I think it was probably when I started my first season of high school soccer, and I got really in shape, and was feeling really good about myself.



My mom was just like – she made a comment. She was like, "I'm really proud of you. You're staying really healthy, and staying in shape." That was probably like the best conversation.

*Interviewer:* What is the worst conversation?

*Interviewee:* I think the worst was actually a little bit before I went to leave for college, because my parents were trying to be like, "You know, you can't go to college. There's the freshman 15, and we don't think that you can afford to have the freshman 15." My parents like us to look very nice, and I'm pretty sure I'd be this way regardless of my weight, but I'm like the jeans and t-shirt kind of girl, or sweatpants. My dad was like, "You know, if you're not going to try and lose weight, you need to shop for clothes for your body type." It felt like too much, like they were trying to control me, and half the time I was like ready to be out. That probably contributed to how irritated I was.

*Interviewer:* Is there anyone you are not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* Probably just my friends because I feel like – I know they don't judge me for how I look at all, but there's still that little feeling like, when I'm discussing how I'm dealing with my weight, they're not dealing with the same kind of issues because they're not at the same weight that I am. They're not dealing with how to lose larger amounts of weight. When they're trying, their goal is, "I'm going to lose five pounds."

*Interviewer:* Right. Do you identify with other people who have similar shapes?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. I don't really ever think about, "Oh, that person is the same general shape as me. They might be cool."

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* That's not my thing.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight of who you are?

*Interviewee:* I don't think it's very important. Obviously it limits me in some ways, like I'm not as active right now as I normally am, so that influences how often I go play pickup games of soccer, because when I'm in that environment, I feel like I should be so much more in shape and be able to do so many more things that I'm not doing. Just shopping is not as enjoyable I guess, so that affects how I act, because the stores I shop at aren't always the same stores my friends shop at, or when they're shopping they're like, "You should try this on." I'm like, "That's not really my size." It's like flattering in that way, like, I'm glad you think I can fit in that, but I can't.

*Interviewer:* [Laughter] Have you ever lost over 10 pounds?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How much did you lose?

*Interviewee:* We were trying this new diet called ACG, and I ended up losing I think 18 pounds on it.

*Interviewer:* When was this?

*Interviewee:* This was actually the beginning of my senior year.

*Interviewer:* Why did you decide to do it?

*Interviewee:* It was just because my senior soccer season was going up, and I was starting to get out of shape from my last track season, so I decided to do that diet with my mom, but it's a really very strict diet. It actually inhibits a lot of physical activity, so I didn't stick to it as long as you're actually supposed to. It at least jump started me a little bit, and losing that weight helped me get in to a routine of trying to eat healthier and work out.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost it?

*Interviewee:* Just because it always had a lot to do with sports for me, I would go to practice, or go to play with old teammates, and I'd be like, "I'm lagging. I'm falling behind." I always noticed after I lost weight I felt happier because I felt healthier, and I thought I was healthier, so I felt much better about myself.

*Interviewer:* You mentioned that your family is full of athletes and everything, so do they really put an emphasis on weight in your family, or is it more on activity and things like that?

*Interviewee:* I think it's kind of a mix of both, because both of my parents were very athletic in high school, and college, and all that. As they got older they put on a lot of weight, so now they're working very hard to lose it. We're all young, and my dad is like, "I want you to develop good habits now, so if you're starting now and you're overweight, I don't want you to be that way." There was an emphasis, not on being skinny, but on being healthy, and being able to be active and excel in our activities. That was kind of how that worked.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anyone in your family overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. My dad's side of the family, all of his sisters are obese except for I think his eldest sister. They struggle with fat. Then my mom's side of the family, her father and her great grandmother are overweight, and lot of her aunts are as well. Kind of on both sides there's a lot of either being overweight or obese, and I think it definitely contributes to how my parents feel about it.

*Interviewer:* Do they talk about it their relatives?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What do they say?

*Interviewee:* It will just be an example like, my dad was like, "I want you to get healthier because I don't want you to be like my sisters. One of the examples was, "Your Aunt Sherry went to the beach, and she wore yoga pants and a t-shirt in to the ocean because she didn't feel comfortable enough to be in a swimsuit." He's like, "I don't want that to be you."

*Interviewer:* Do they treat them any differently?

*Interviewee:* No. There's nothing about how they treat anybody in the family based on weight, but they'll just like, when we're at home say something along the lines of, "They're limited in a way that I don't want you to be."

*Interviewer:* Is anyone in your family underweight?

*Interviewee:* No. Well actually my mom's mother, my Nanny, and my mom's sister for a while.

*Interviewer:* Was anything said about them?

*Interviewee:* With my mom's mother it was just because – oh, that's my— *[Laughter]* With my mom's mother it was because she couldn't do a lot of physical activity. It was a lot of muscle mass loss. I think our biggest concern is because she has degenerative disk disease, that was affecting it. Then my mom's sister got in to some trouble with methamphetamine, so she was very underweight for a while. We kind of avoided talking about her a lot, because it bothered my mom a lot, and my mom didn't I guess want us to be aware of it for a while.

*Interviewer:* Were they treated any differently?

*Interviewee:* Not my mom's mother, but her sister, when she'd come to visit, there was a lot of weariness about her, and that was fully contributed to her drug use, and then just her being so small. She looked very frail, and it was just very

different to the person we had grown up with as our aunt. It was very, very different.

*Interviewer:* Are there ever situations where you're self-conscious of your weight?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What are those types of situations?

*Interviewee:* Just going out shopping, I'm conscious of it. When I go to work out at the Rec, I'm definitely conscious of it. Sometimes just going out, when you're going out to clubs, or going out to a party, and you're dressing up. there's clothing options that aren't necessarily – they are available to me, but they don't look good, and so it's just – it's a little different I feel when I go to my closet to get ready, than it is for some of my friends.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you ever take any action like after those situations, to change?

*Interviewee:* I'll think about it, and maybe I'll do more time at the Rec if I'm feeling like that, or I'll go to eat lunch and I'll feel like, "Actually, I really want a salad." Those little decisions just for a couple of weeks, or maybe even just a week where I felt like I really needed to make a change. Then something happens and I'm back to my regular routine.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Kind of switching gears here, are there situations in which you feel your gender as a female is more important than others, other parts of your identity?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I was kind of a tomboy growing up, so it wasn't like a big deal until I started getting in to middle school and high school that I even was a girl, because I shared all the same interests as the guys, go out and play some football. That was me. I don't feel like gender really plays a big role in how I act in certain situations. Occasionally it does, but not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay. All right.

*[End of Audio]*

### **Overweight and Obese Participant 10: Katie**

- Interviewer:* Okay. This is interview participant identification two dot two zero seven. The date is December 2, 2010. The location is 117 Bailey Hall. Okay. So to start off with, how would you describe yourself physically?
- Interviewee:* Pretty much normal. Anything above normal.
- Interviewer:* Like above normal how? Like height?
- Interviewee:* Well height, yeah I'm a little taller than normal. I'd say endurance is pretty high.
- Interviewer:* Okay. And if you were going on a blind date and you're talking to the person on the phone and they said what would – how will I know you? How would you describe yourself?
- Interviewee:* Tall. Dark.
- Interviewer:* And handsome? *[Laughter]*
- Interviewee:* Tall, dark, and hmm – tall, dark, and Asian.
- Interviewer:* Okay. How would you physically describe your friends in terms of their body shapes?
- Interviewee:* Well, I want to say half of them are in good shape. And half of them – they're not really in good shape. From what you see, they just look an average weight. Nothing out of the ordinary.
- Interviewer:* So are they are like the same size as you or –
- Interviewee:* Most of them are shorter than me so there's only a couple that are about my height or taller or so.
- Interviewer:* In the past, has anyone ever commented about your weight?
- Interviewee:* Yes. They've – during high school, around like Junior to Senior year, I just all of a sudden lost a lot of weight. I don't know how but I guess it's just I must have been really busy with a lot of things so – and they just said you've lost like, it looks like you've lost a lot of weight.
- Interviewer:* And who would say that?
- Interviewee:* That was just a girl I know. And my mom – mom especially. My aunts and just friends.

*Interviewer:* And how did that make you feel when you heard those comments?

*Interviewee:* It made me feel pretty good. But my mom, it made me feel like that was kind of bad. She wants me to put on more weight.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* Yeah, mom's like to feed us, don't they?

*Interviewee:* Yeah!

*Interviewer:* So did you take any action regarding those comments?

*Interviewee:* Oh you know, I just kept working out and stayed the same. I'm kind of lazy at times but working out balances it out so –

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Alright. How is your family around food?

*Interviewee:* Well, my mom tries to get me to eat almost at least four times a day. She's always cooking and she just tries to get me to eat a lot. But I try to not eat so much. It's a lot of leftovers.

*Interviewer:* Were there any rules in your house about food?

*Interviewee:* Not so much. Just I really – see for me I eat a lot of different things so I can't stick with the usual one thing for like a couple of days, so I always just eat different foods. But other than that there's really no rules that I can see in my household.

*Interviewer:* Okay. How does your family typically eat their meals?

*Interviewee:* We just sit down and just – we get a portion of the whole entire cooking and I usually finish my portion and then my mom asks me if I want another one. I'm like no thank you. But sometimes I go for another helping, but usually that's about it.

*Interviewer:* Do you eat together?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, we eat together.

*Interviewer:* What do you talk about when you eat?

*Interviewee:* Talk about how school was and how I did prior to eating. That's usually about it.

*Interviewer:* Do you ever talk about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Well when my mom brings it up, yes. I always have to tell her that I'm eating and she's like you've got to eat more. I'm like oh, I do but I don't think you understand mom.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* What does your mom look like in terms of her body shape?

*Interviewee:* She's five eleven, around 170-180 I want to say.

*Interviewer:* So pretty healthy.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, she's pretty healthy.

*Interviewer:* And you used to have these conversations at home? What is the best conversation you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* When one of my aunts said I could be a model and I was like huh! Really? That's pretty flattering but I don't know if I'm up to that level yet.

*Interviewer:* Very nice to hear! What's one of the worst conversations you've ever had about your weight?

*Interviewee:* Worst? Well, I was like back when I was around seven or eight and eating a lot and I would say I was told to not eat so much – not so much sweets, not so much cola and everything. That's one of the things I can remember.

*Interviewer:* Are you – who are you not comfortable talking about your weight with?

*Interviewee:* No one really. I can talk about it with anyone.

*Interviewer:* Do you identify with other people of your shape?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How so?

*Interviewee:* I like to ask them about how their families work and how – exactly like if they get their height from their mom or their dad's side, their weight. I'm kind of curious to see like other than me.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Exactly how they work.

*Interviewer:* How important is your weight to who you are?

*Interviewee:* I would say it's important but we shouldn't stress it too much. I usually don't stress it because there's not a lot of times when I can do a lot to improve my weight, to gain or lose weight, so I always usually just stay the same weight so it's kind of hard for me to really fluctuate so I don't worry about it.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever lost – I mean you said before you'd lost some weight before. How much did you lose?

*Interviewee:* Twenty pounds.

*Interviewer:* When did you do this?

*Interviewee:* Around Junior-Senior year.

*Interviewer:* Oh, yeah. Junior-Senior year you said. Sorry. And you said you didn't really have a reason, right? Or did you try to lose weight?

*Interviewee:* I just – I used to play football and then after I got out like my sophomore year I just started lifting and running and just continuing the usually path from what I continued from before.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so it was more for athletic reasons.

*Interviewee:* And then it turned out to be personal, so –

*Interviewer:* How did you feel before you lost your weight?

*Interviewee:* I felt the same, but I did feel a little bigger, but other than that it's just the same.

*Interviewer:* How did you feel after?

*Interviewee:* I felt a little better. I felt that I had a little more energy, a lot more endurance and just looked a little bit different from my previous weight.

*Interviewer:* So you said your mom was pretty healthy. Is there anyone in your family who is overweight or obese?

*Interviewee:* Looking back on it, no.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Is anyone underweight?



*Interviewee:* Nope.

*Interviewer:* Is weight talked about in your family? Like is it important?

*Interviewee:* Weight so much isn't an issue, it's just what – it's like what my mom wants me to do like just to eat more or – basically eat more.

*[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* I don't quite understand but she just thinks I'm too skinny or something.

*Interviewer:* Are you ever self conscious about your weight?

*Interviewee:* I want to say yes. Back in my high school when I did weigh that much and it dropped. It gave a little confidence boost after that. But yeah, I'd say yeah.

*Interviewer:* So did anyone say anything or like what made you feel that way before you dropped the weight?

*Interviewee:* Well, I was around 230 so that just – and when I weighed myself I was just thinking that's a lot. I could cut it down. That's what I decided to do.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so kind of switching gears here. Are there situations in which you feel you're gender as a male is more important than any other parts of your identify? Are there situations when you know that – like you walk into a situation and think wow, I really am the male here? Like those word associations. Do you ever experience those situations?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, because whenever you do you have to take control and you have to figure out what you have to do in that situation.

*Interviewer:* Like what would that type of situation be like?

*Interviewee:* I can't really say I've had one of those just yet, so –

*Interviewer:* Okay. Alright.

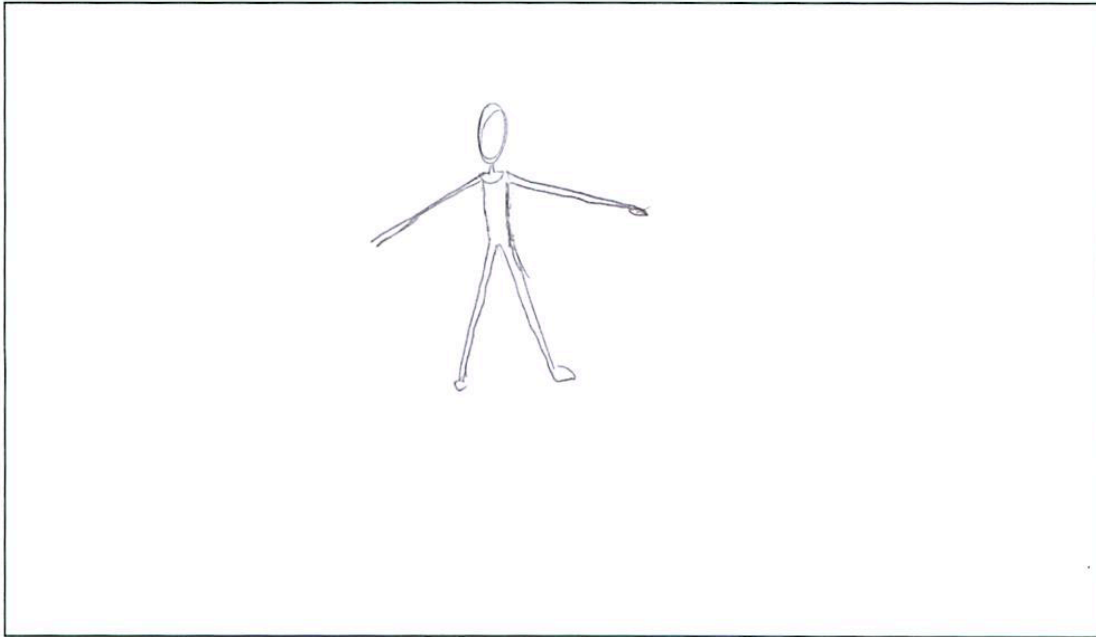
*[End of Audio]*

## **Appendix G**

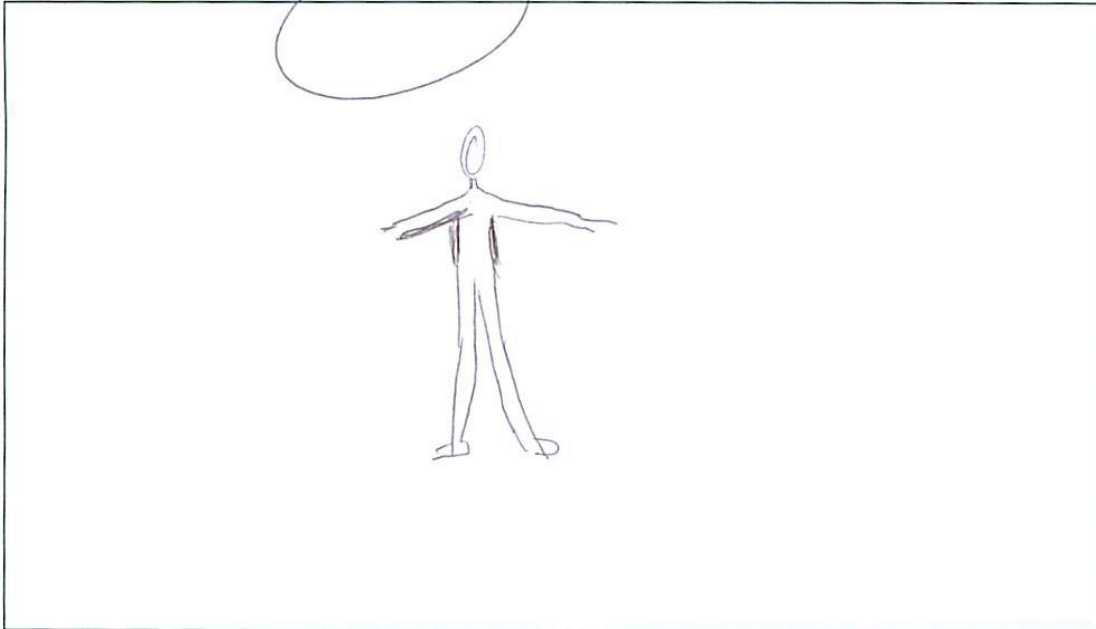
### **Drawings**

Participant #: 1.3.01

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

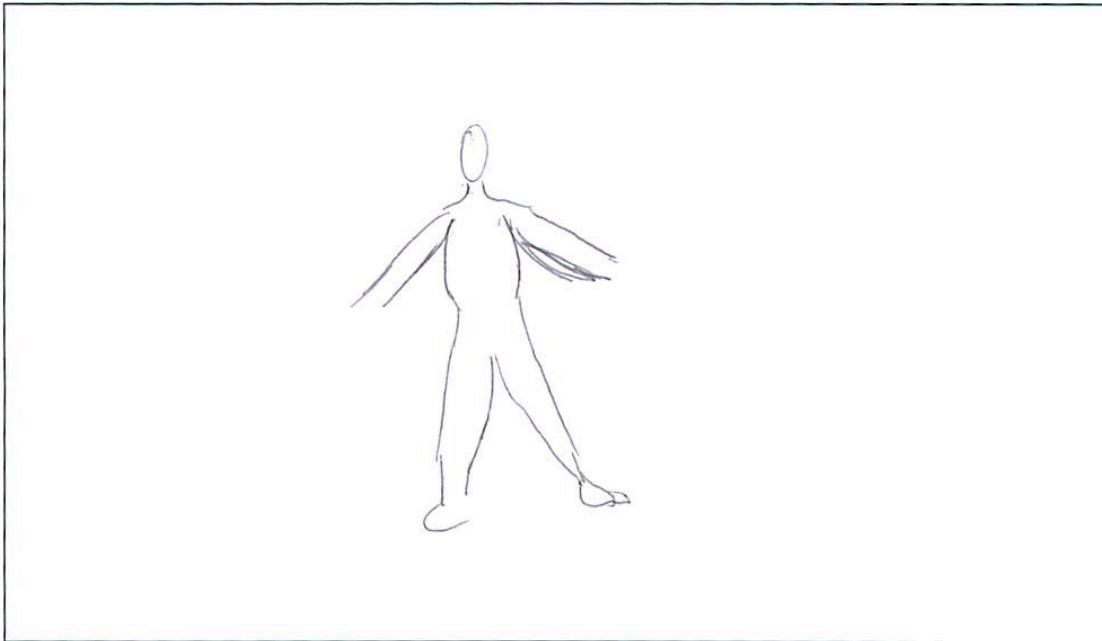


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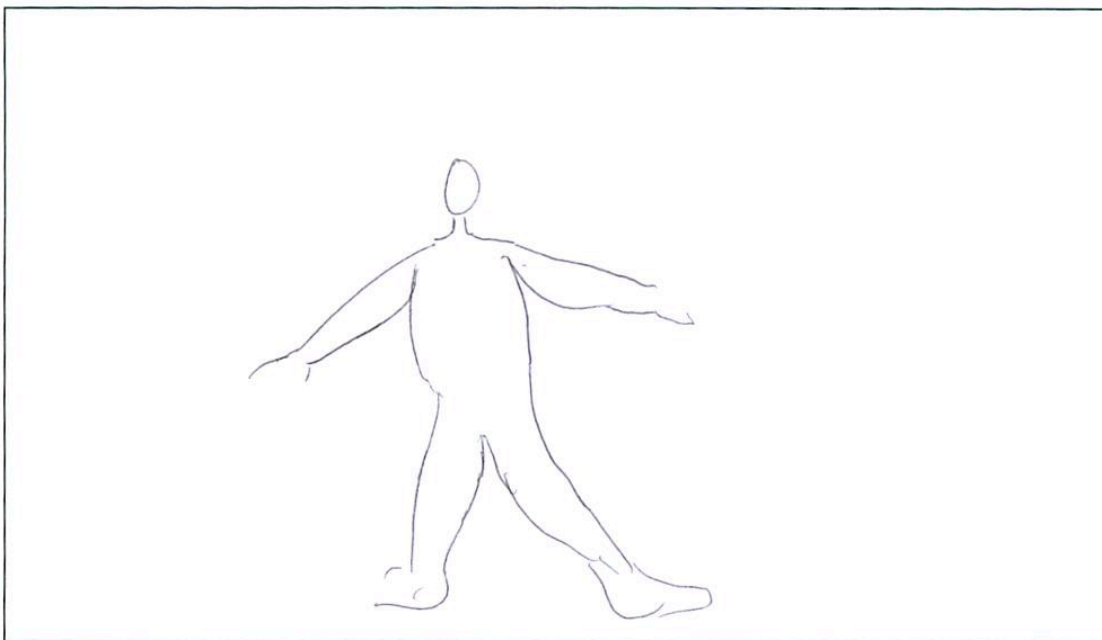


Participant #: 1.3.01

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

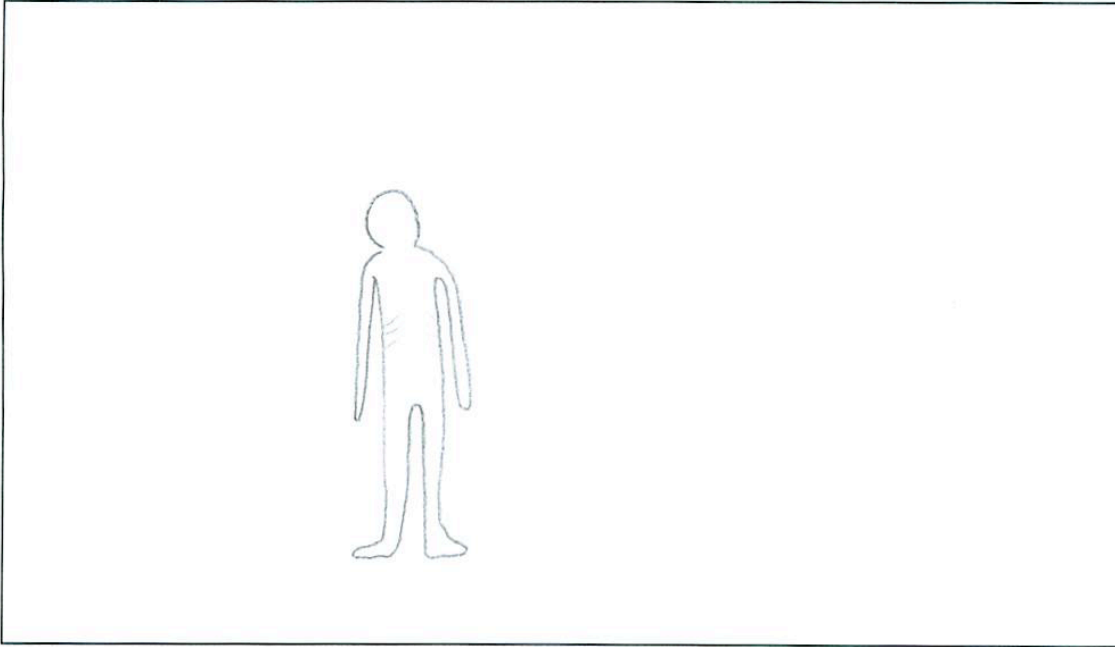


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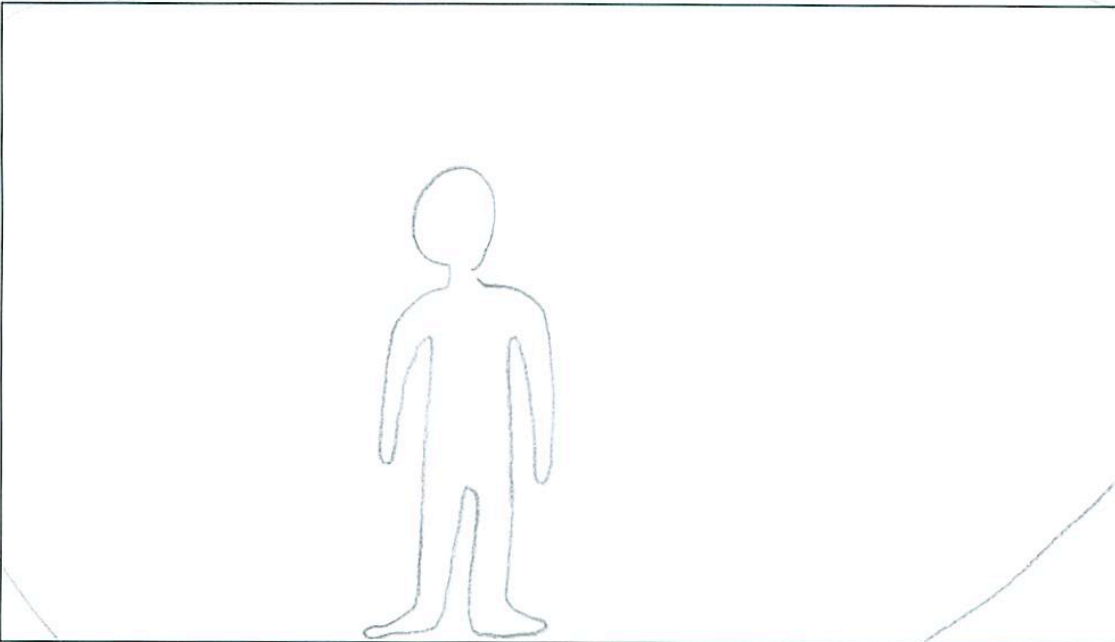


Participant #: 1,3,05

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

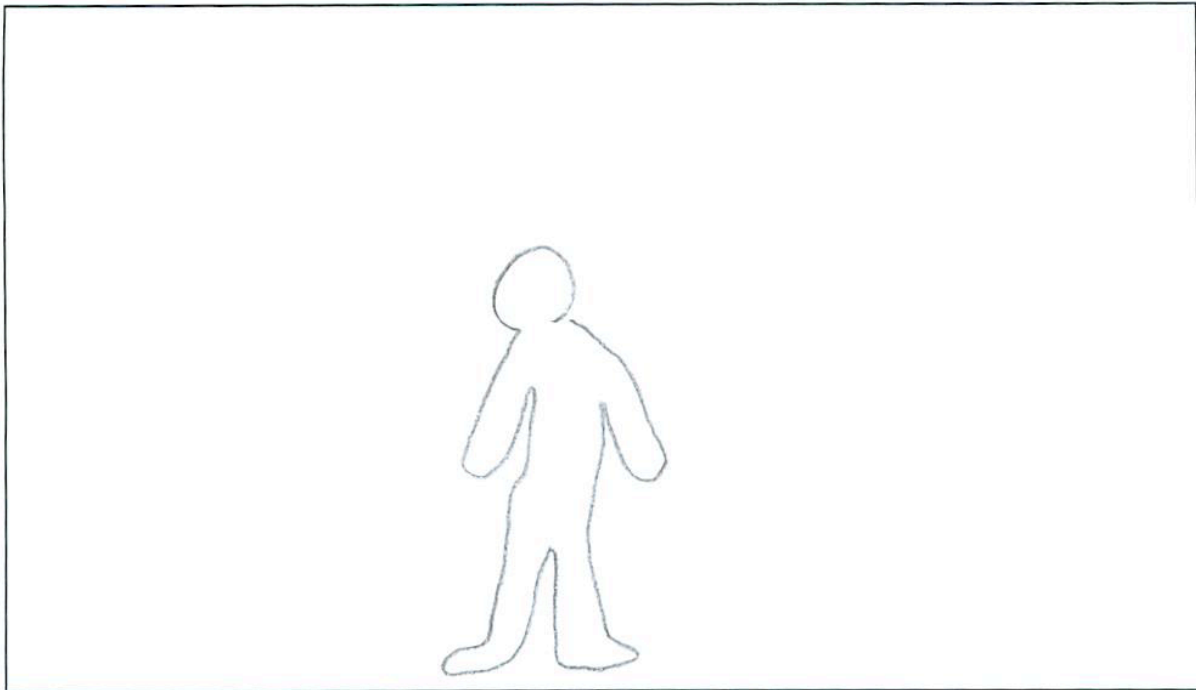


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

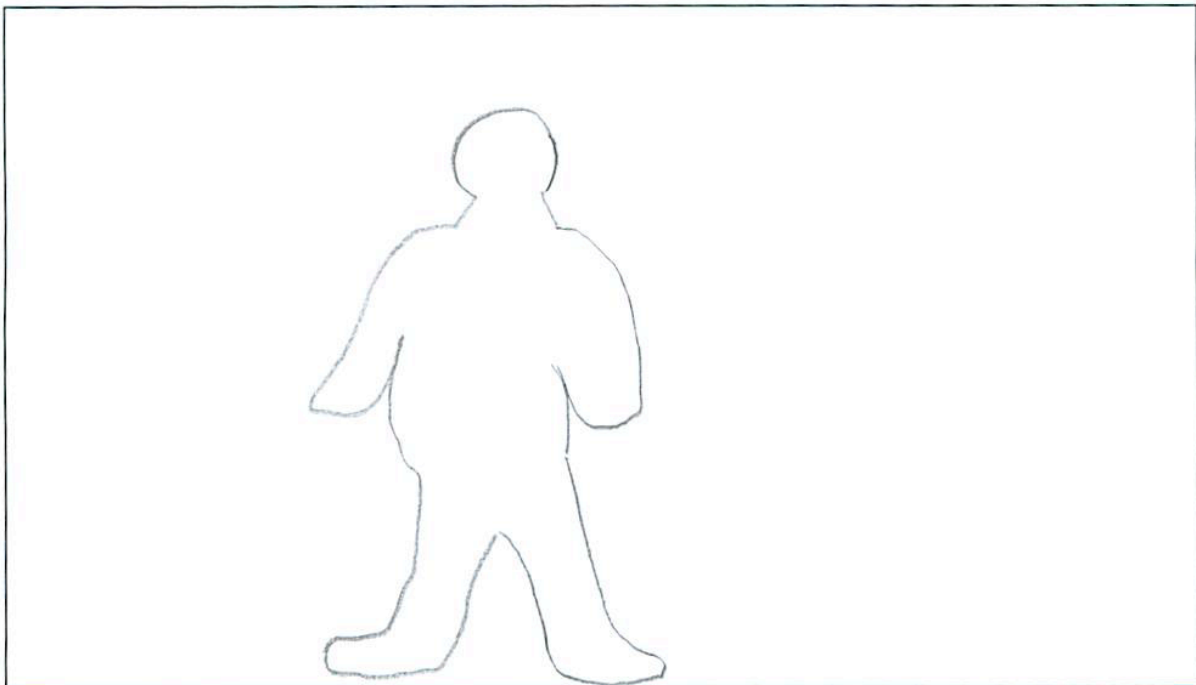


Participant #: 1,3.05

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

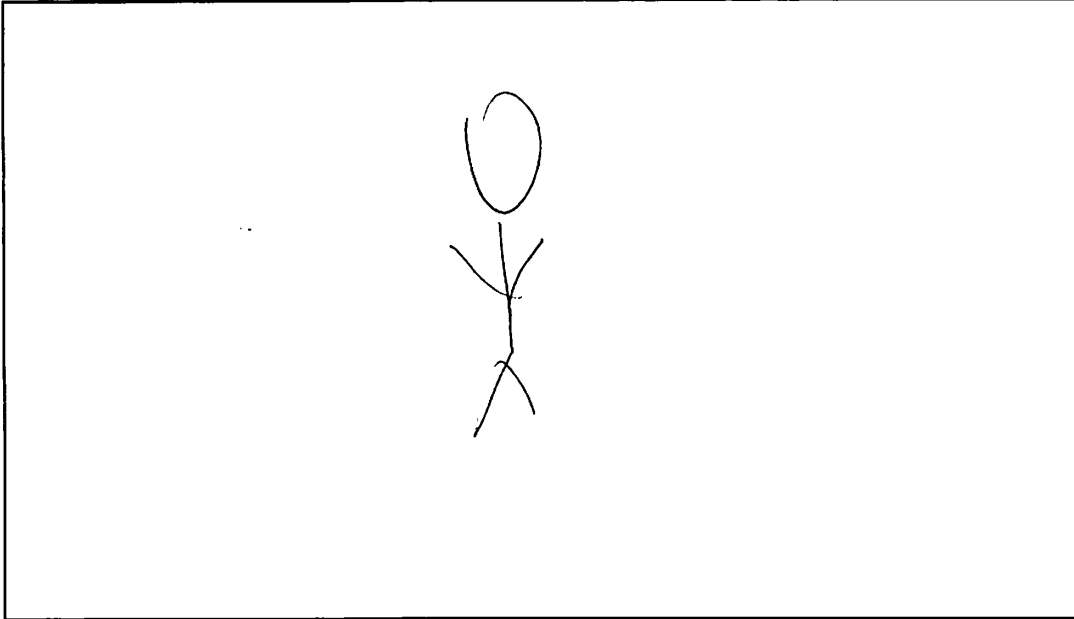


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

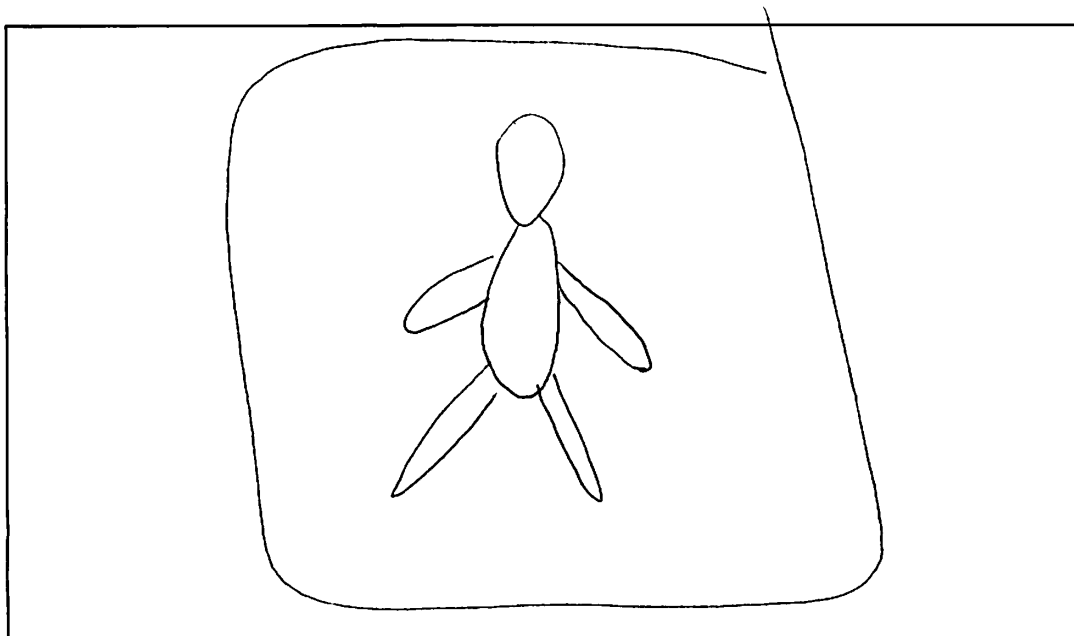


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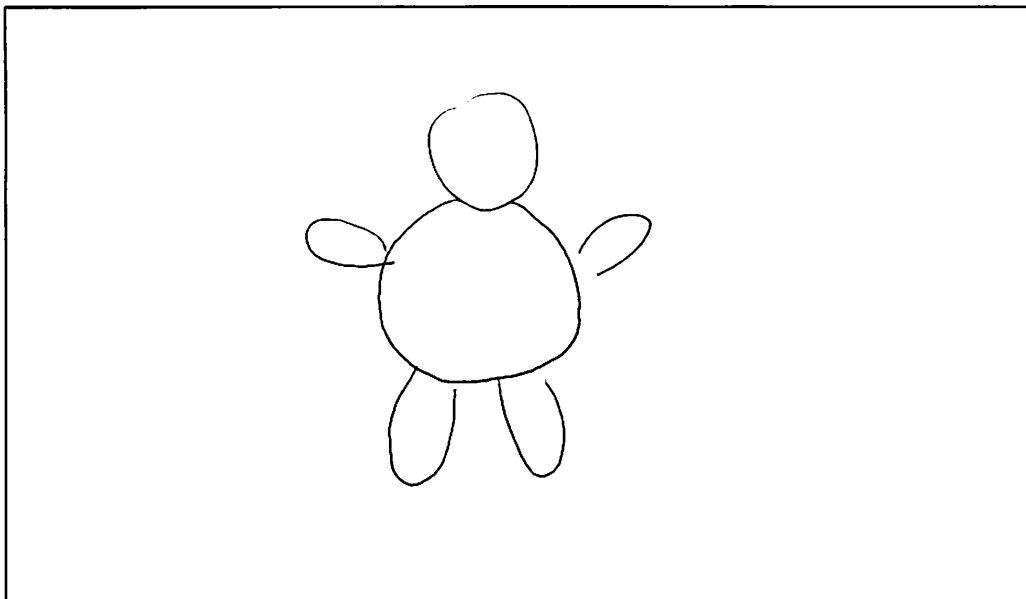


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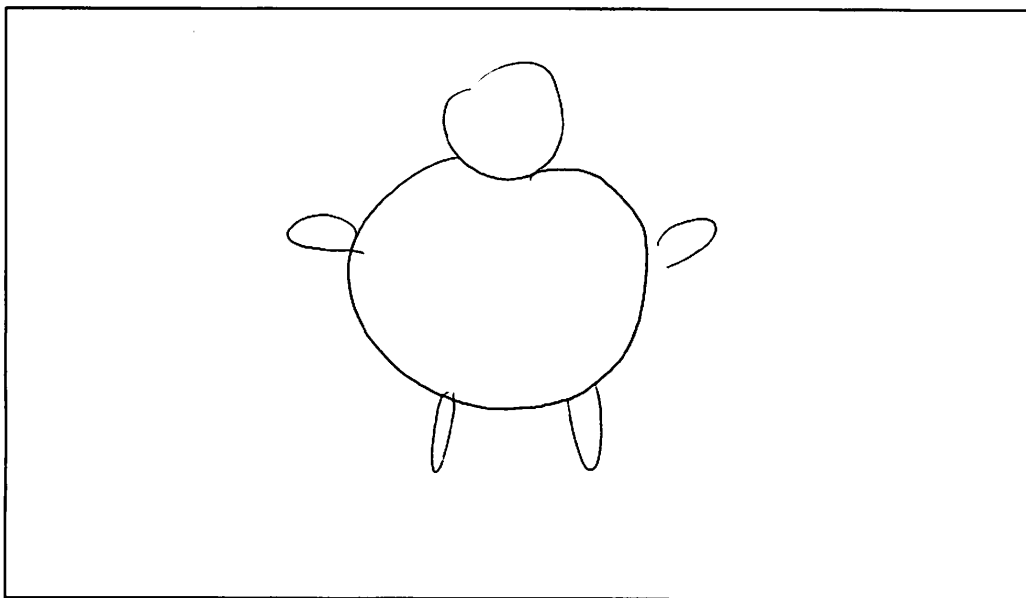


Participant #: 1.3.10

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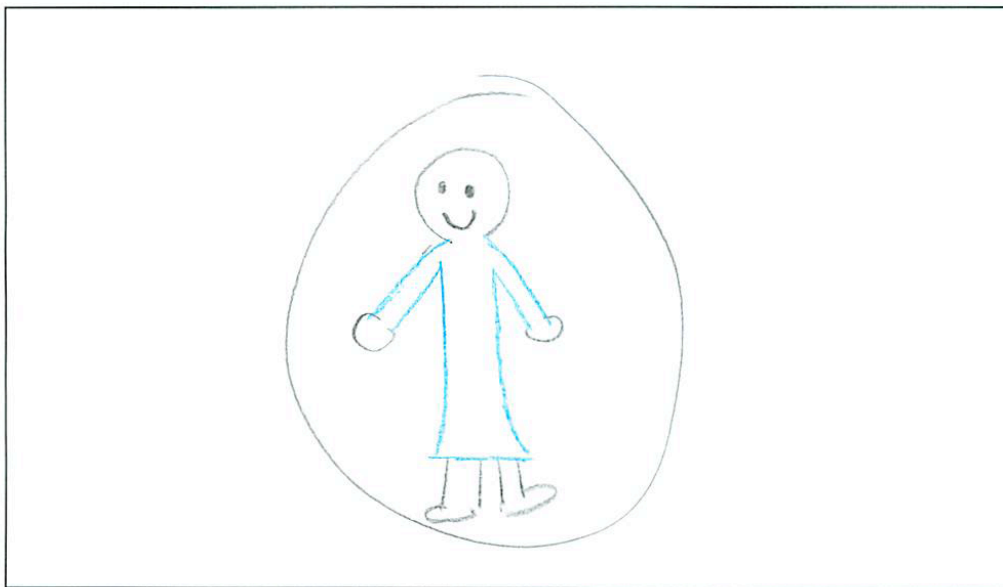
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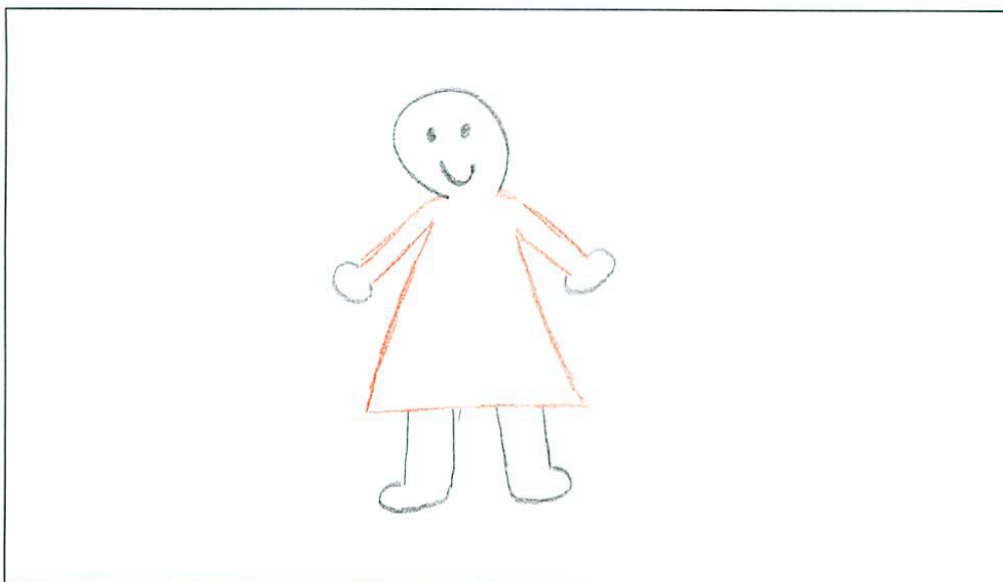


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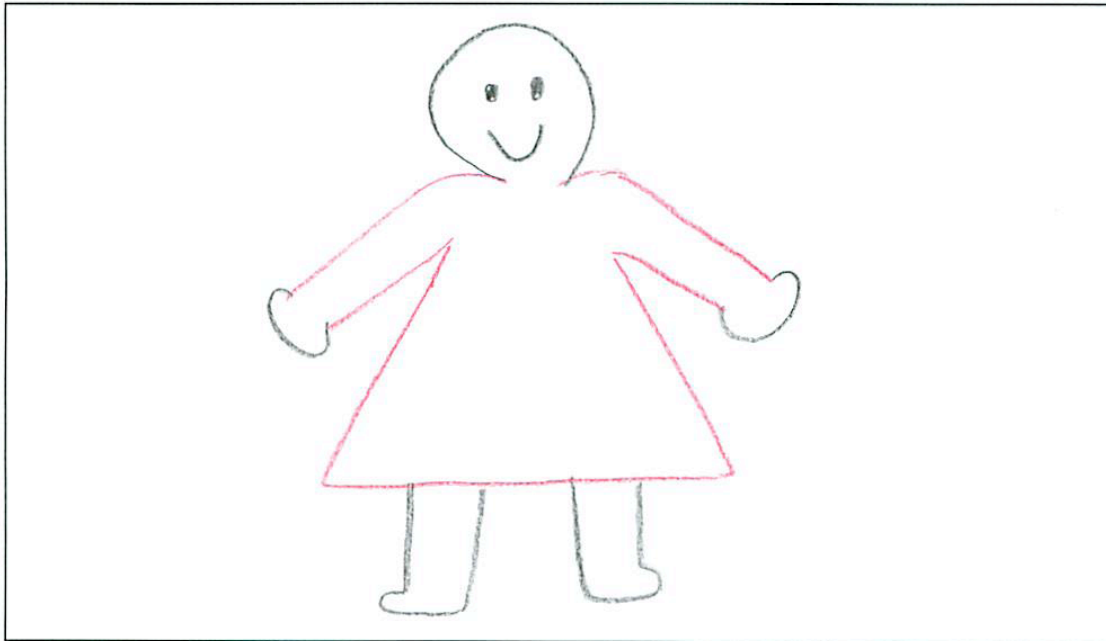


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

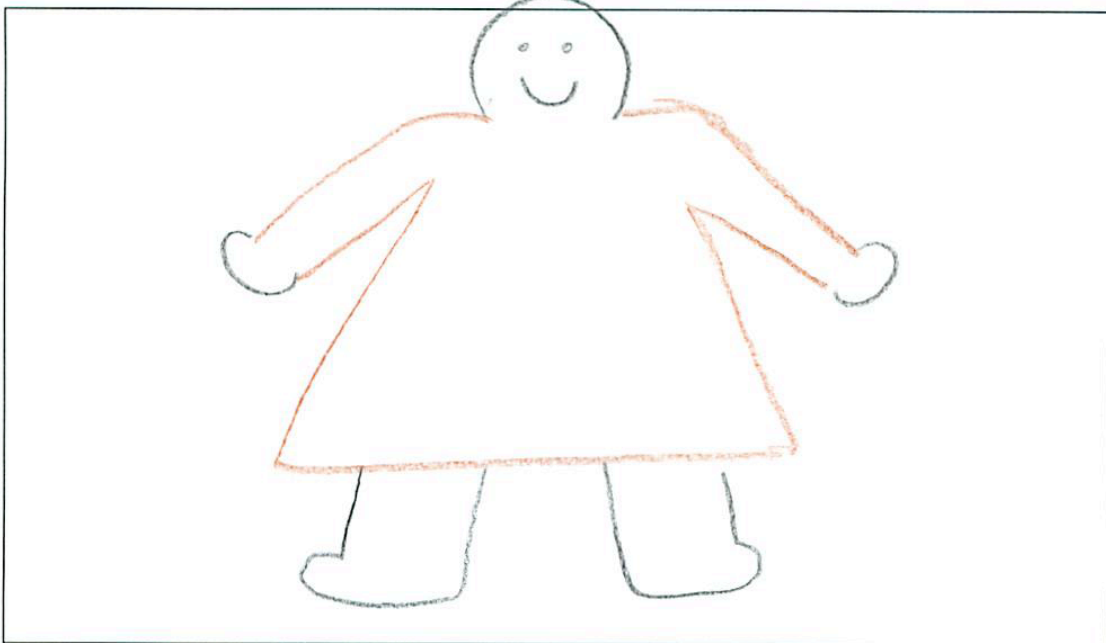


Participant #: 1,3,11

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

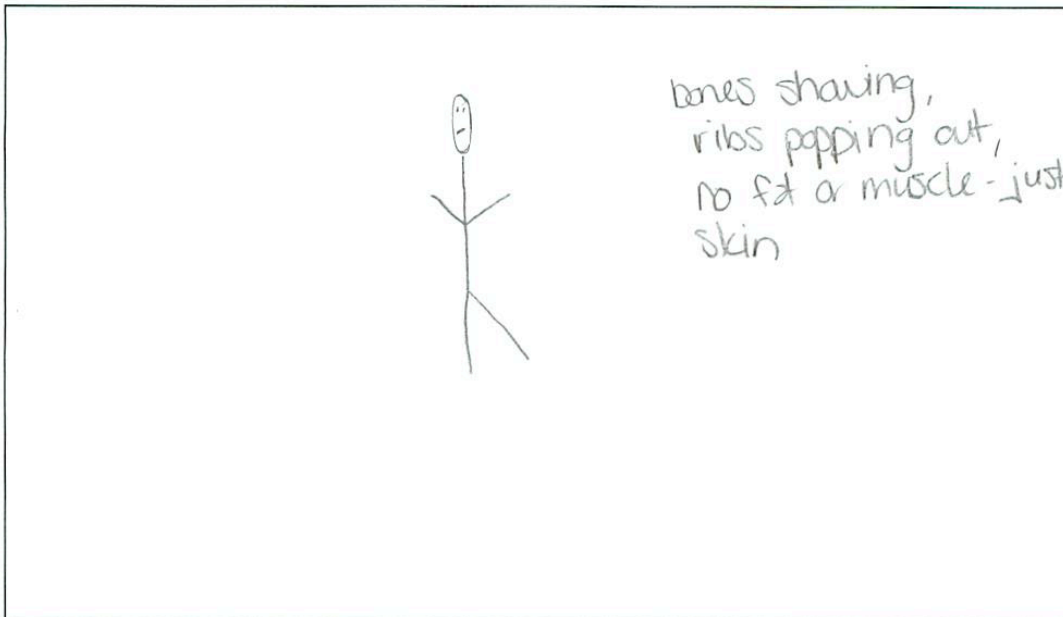


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.1.08

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

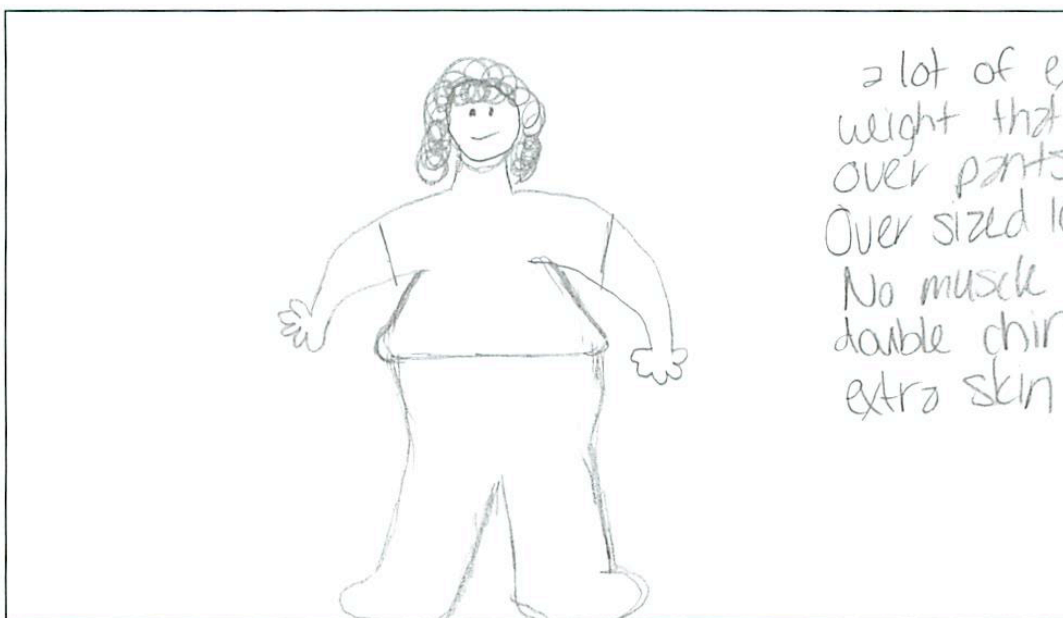


Participant #: 1.1:08

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

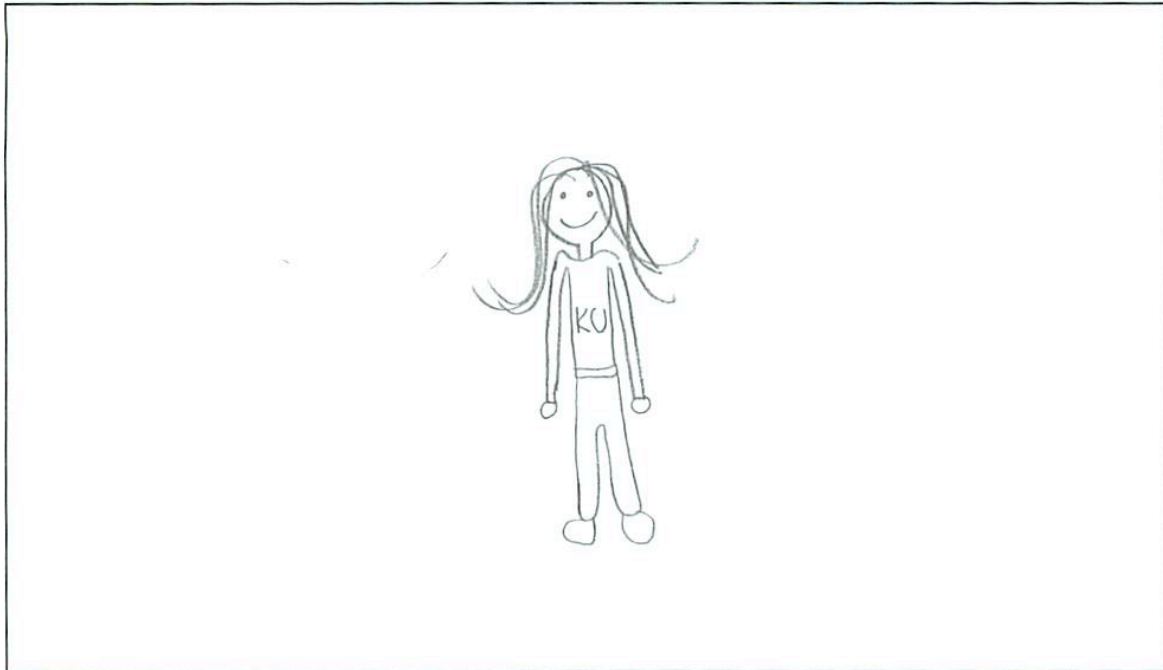


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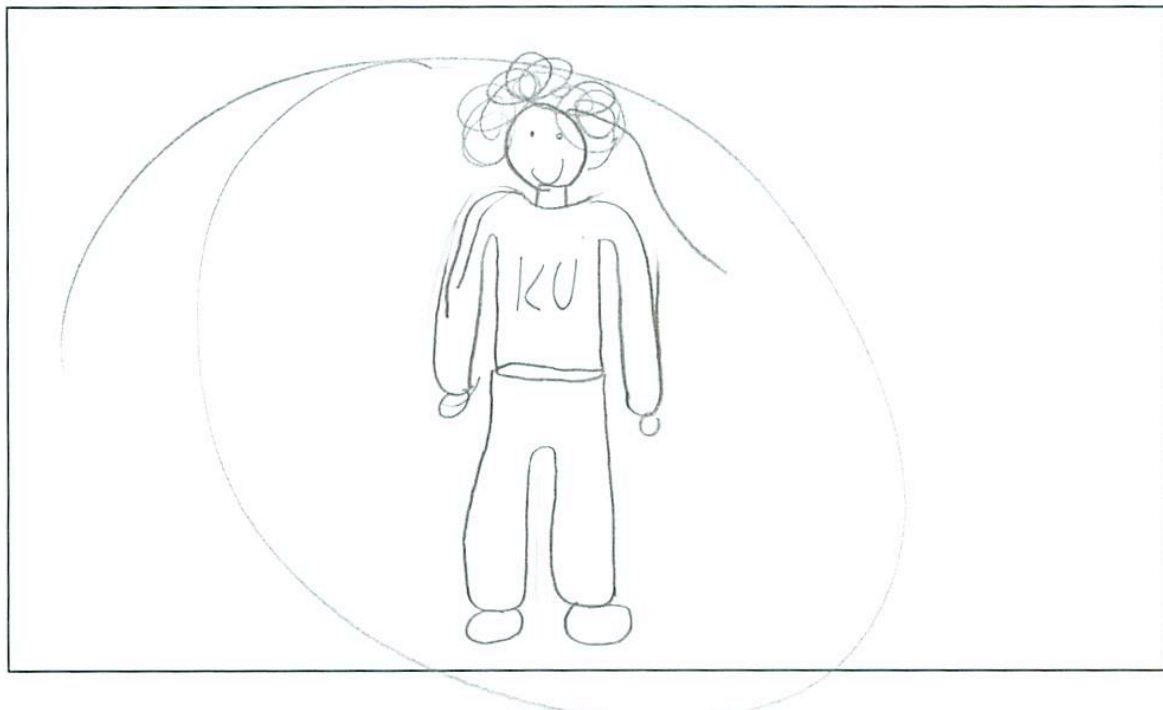


Participant #: 1, 1, 21

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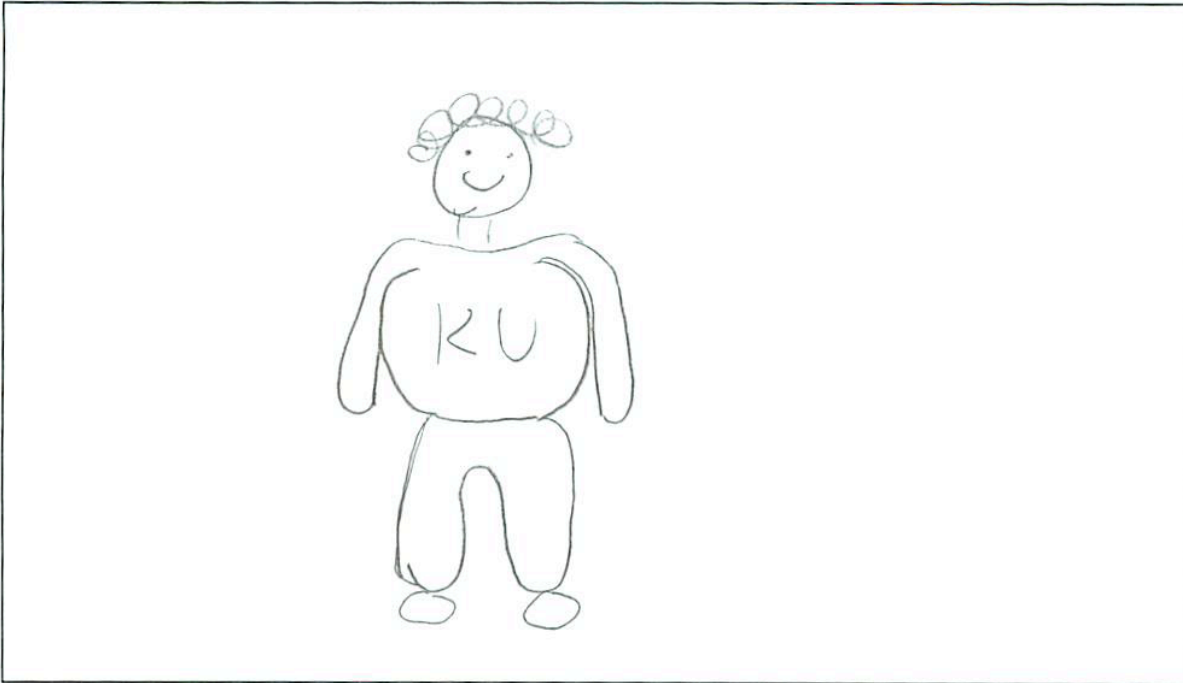


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

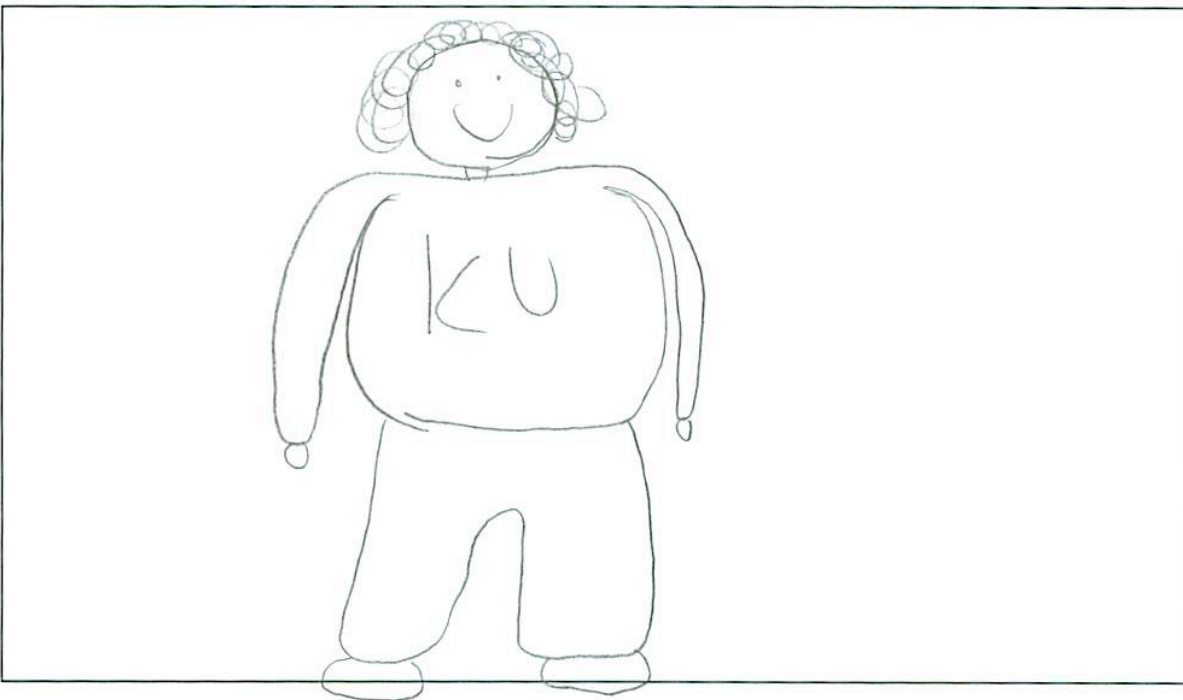


Participant #: 1,1,21

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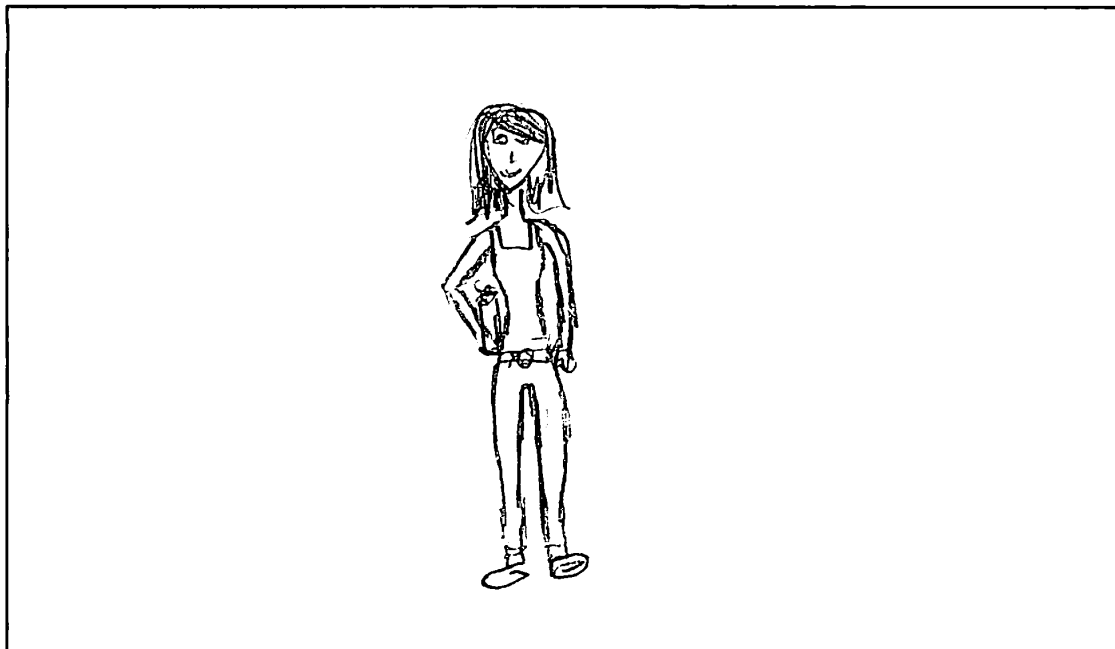


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

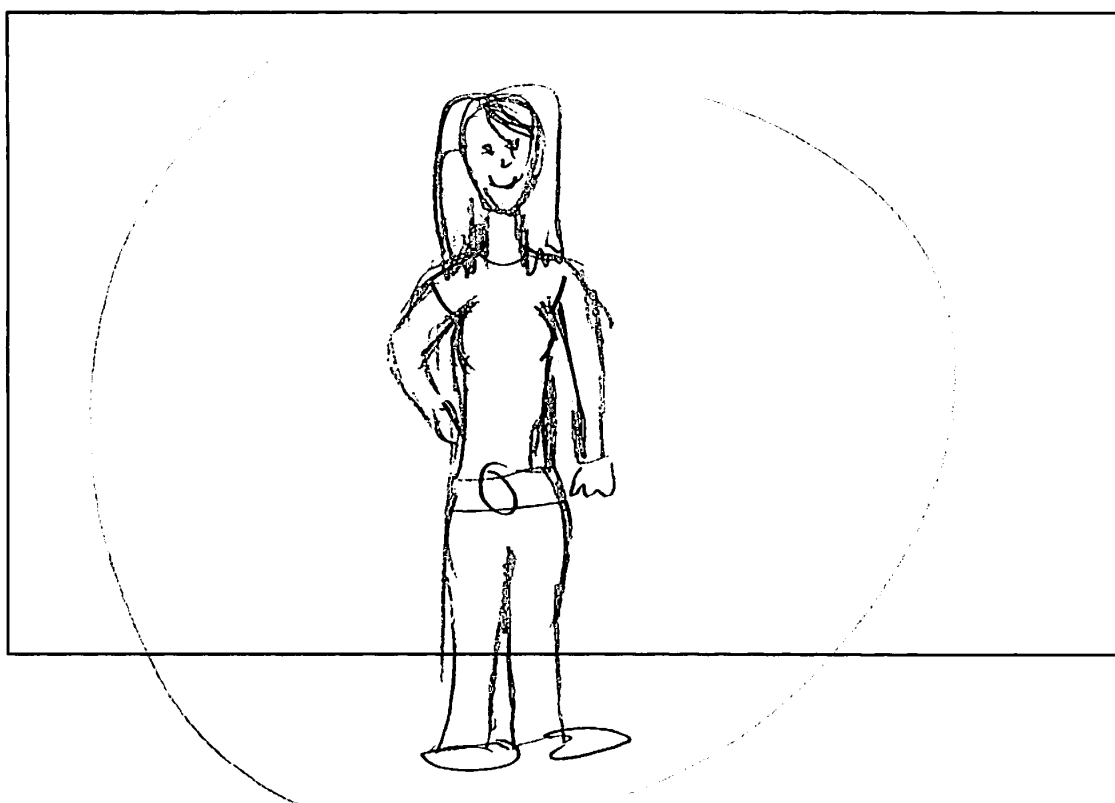


Participant #: ~~1.3.05~~ 1.1.09

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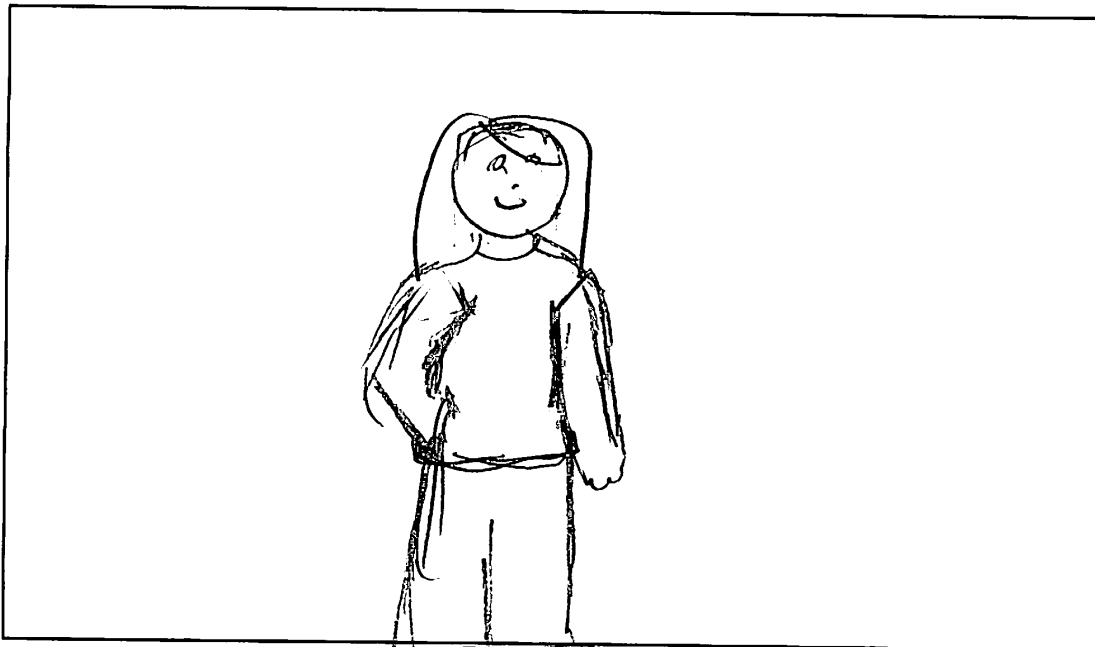


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: ~~13.08~~ 11.09

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



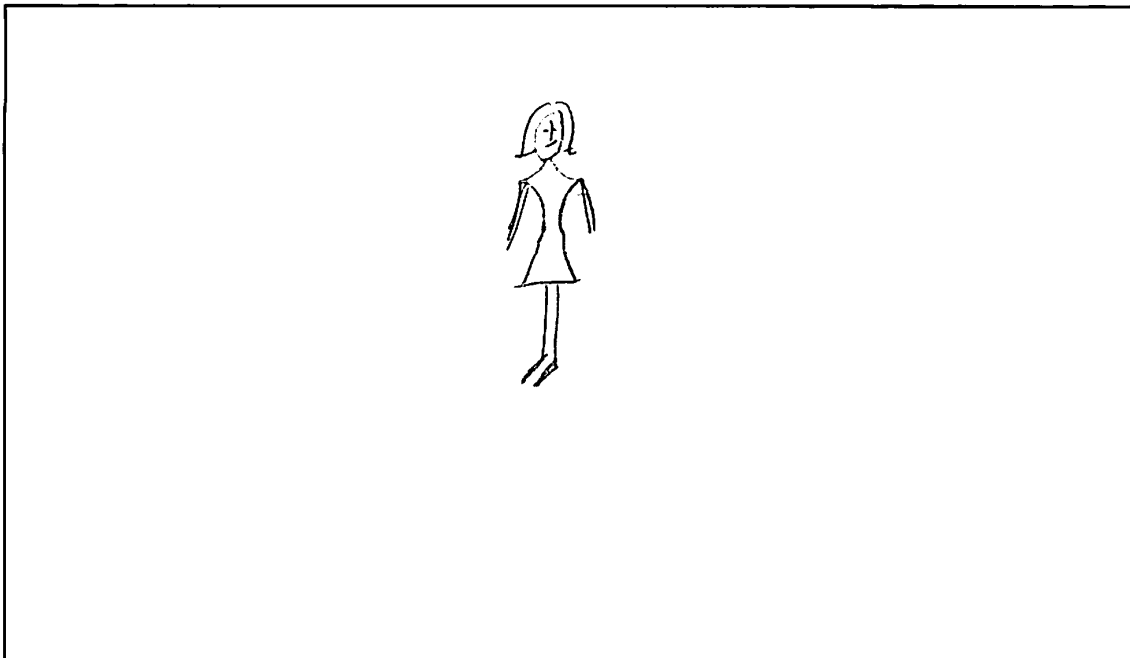
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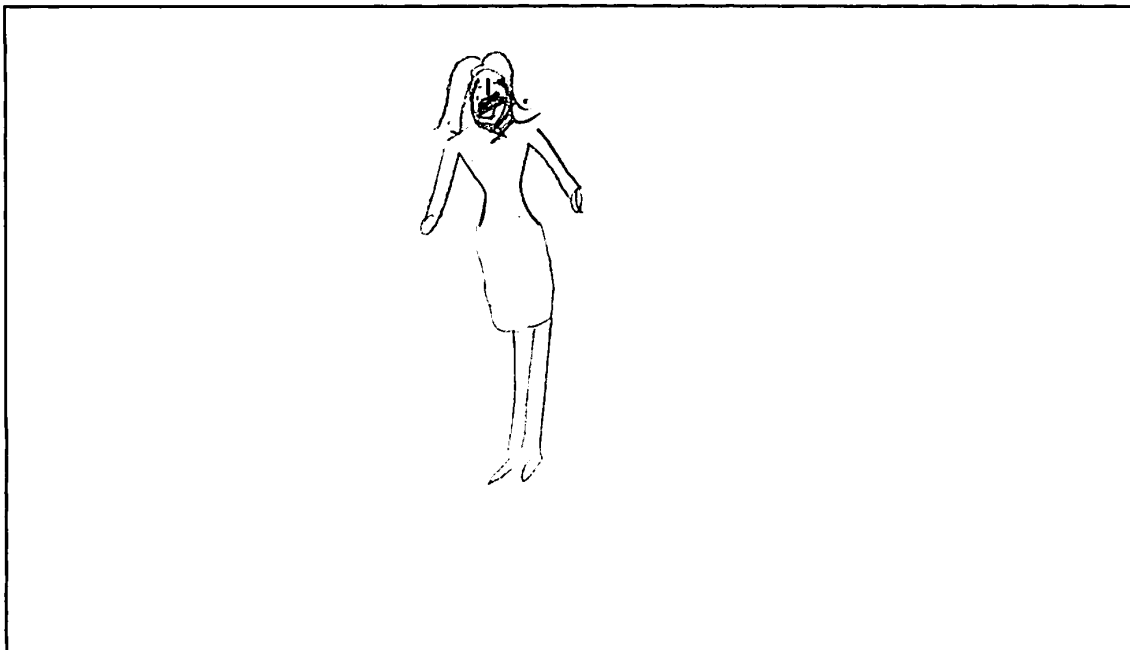


Participant #: 1,1, 96

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.1.96

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

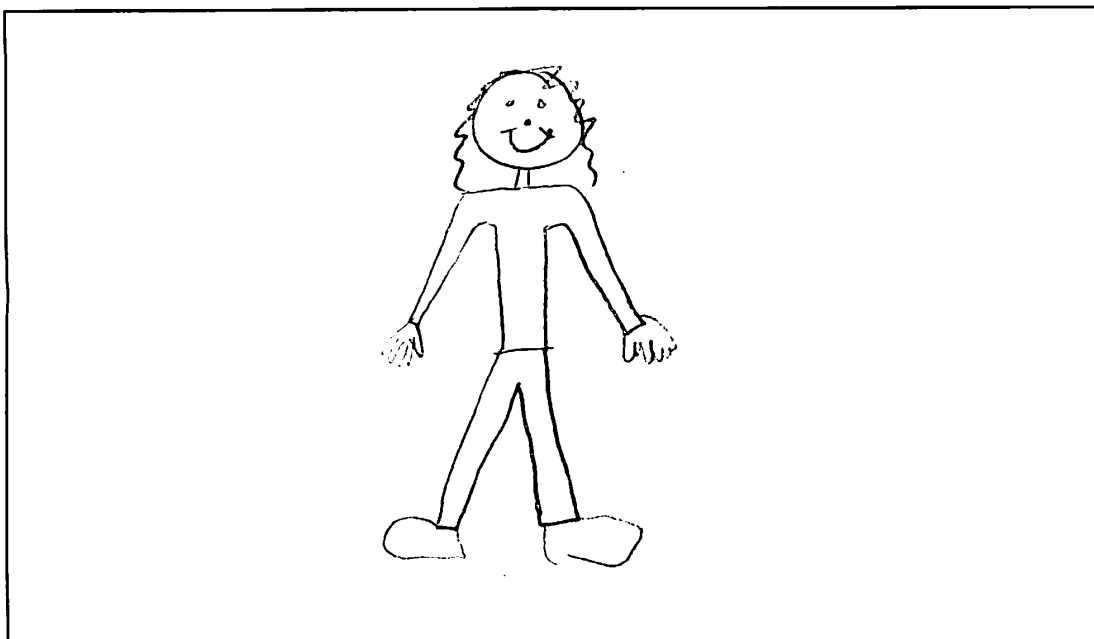


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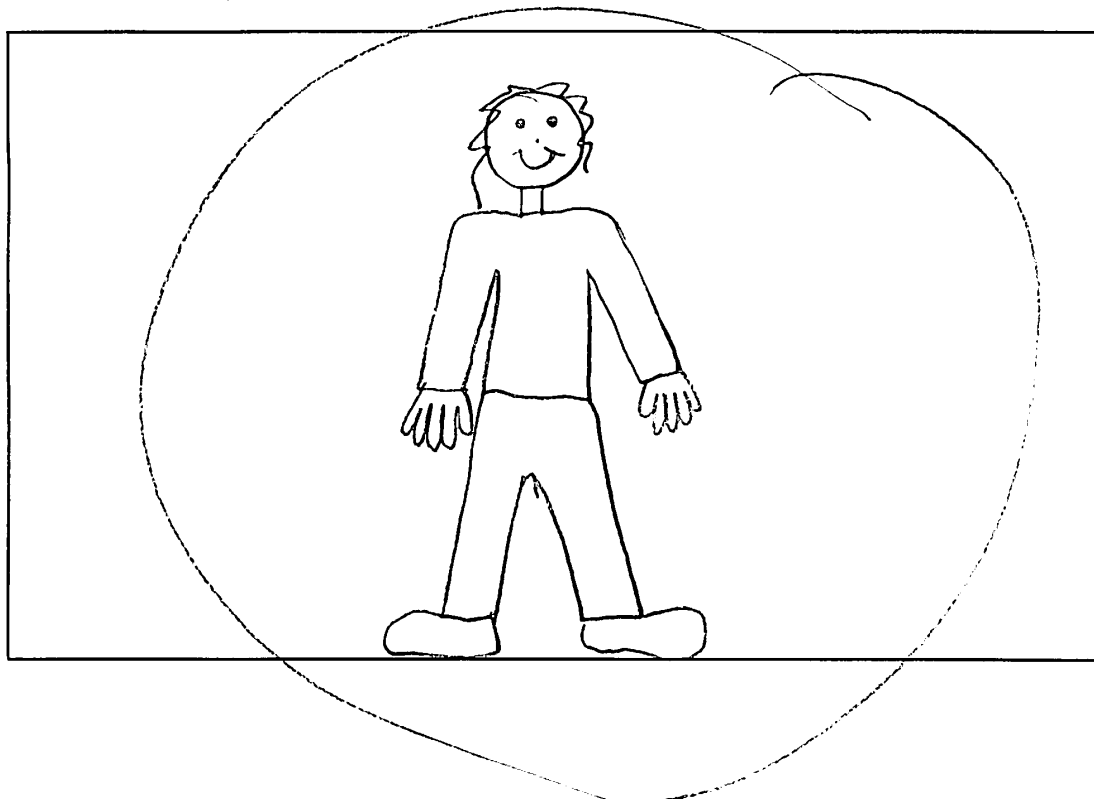


1.1.94

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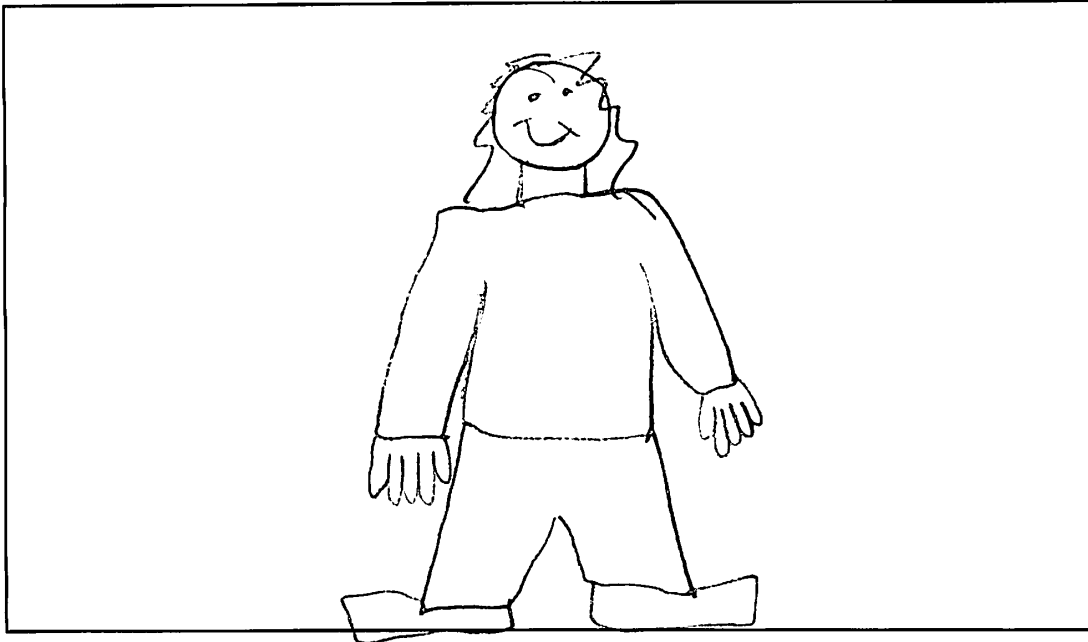


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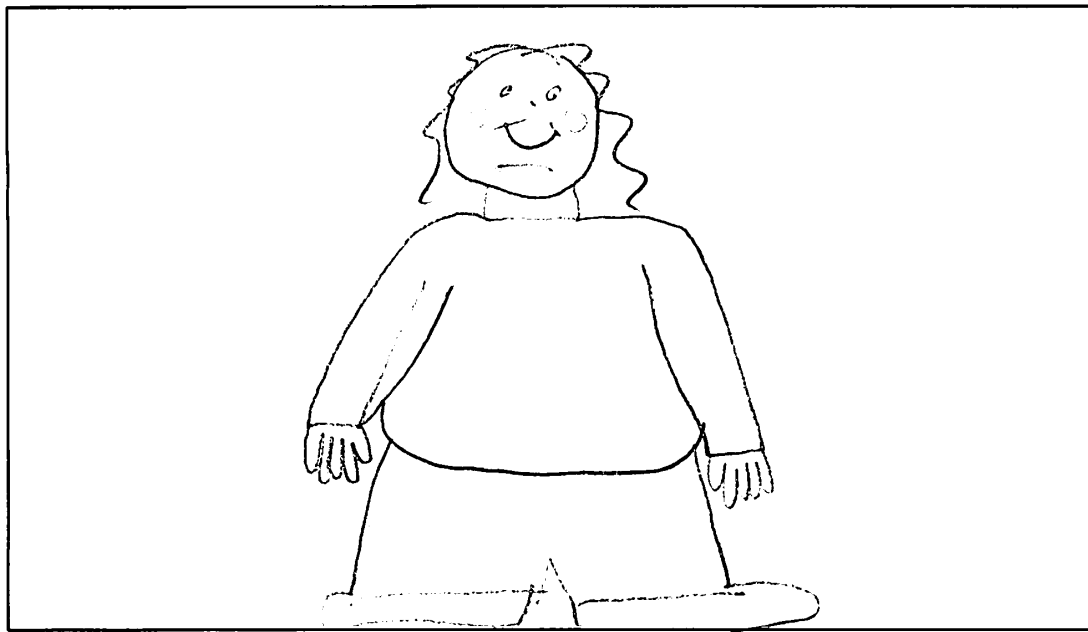


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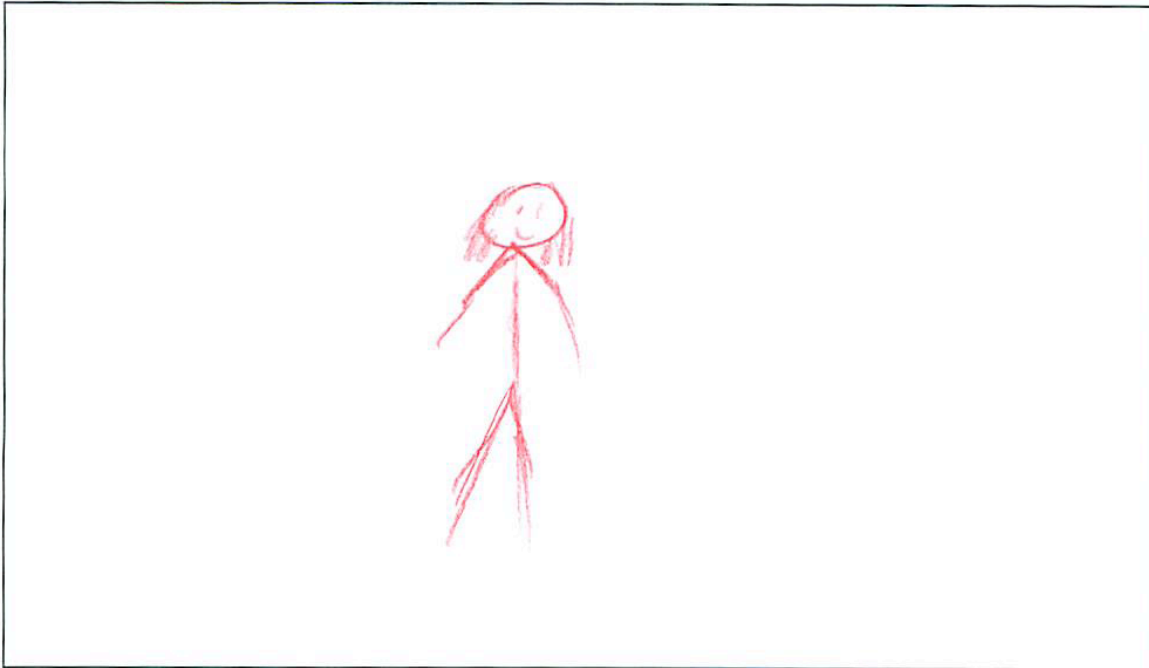


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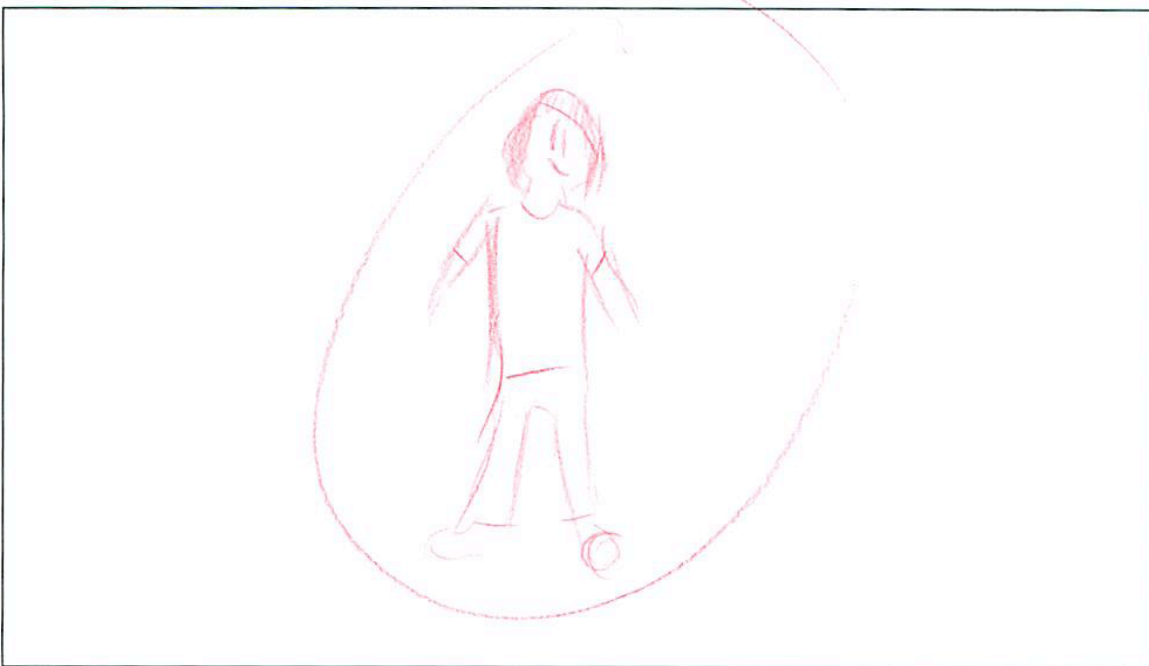


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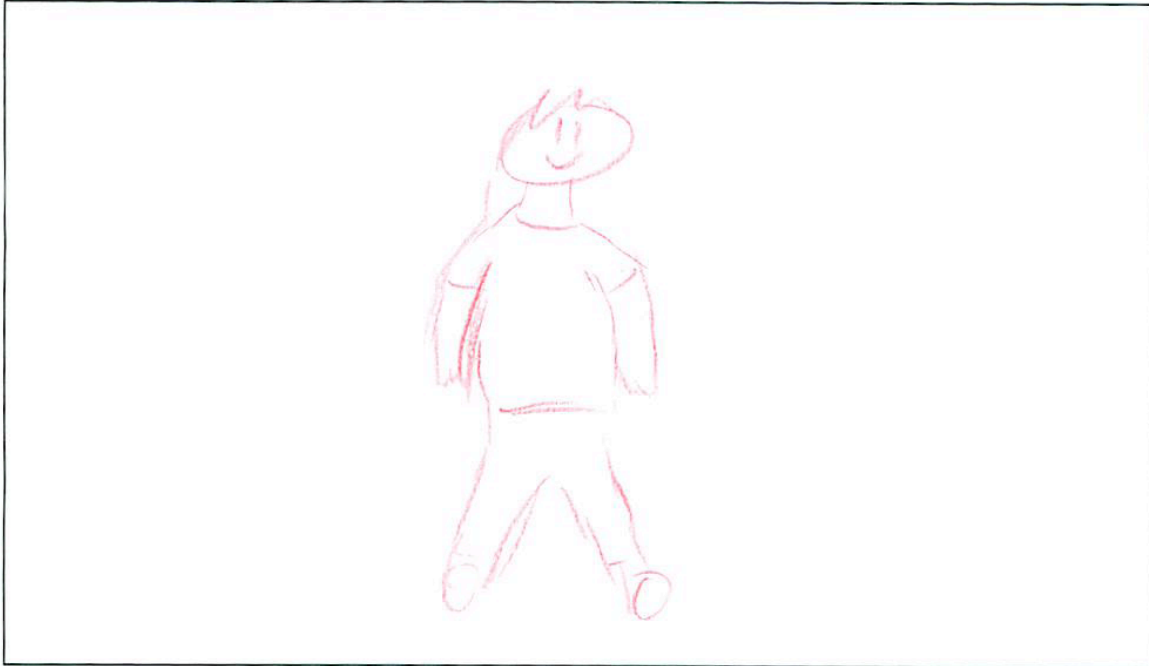


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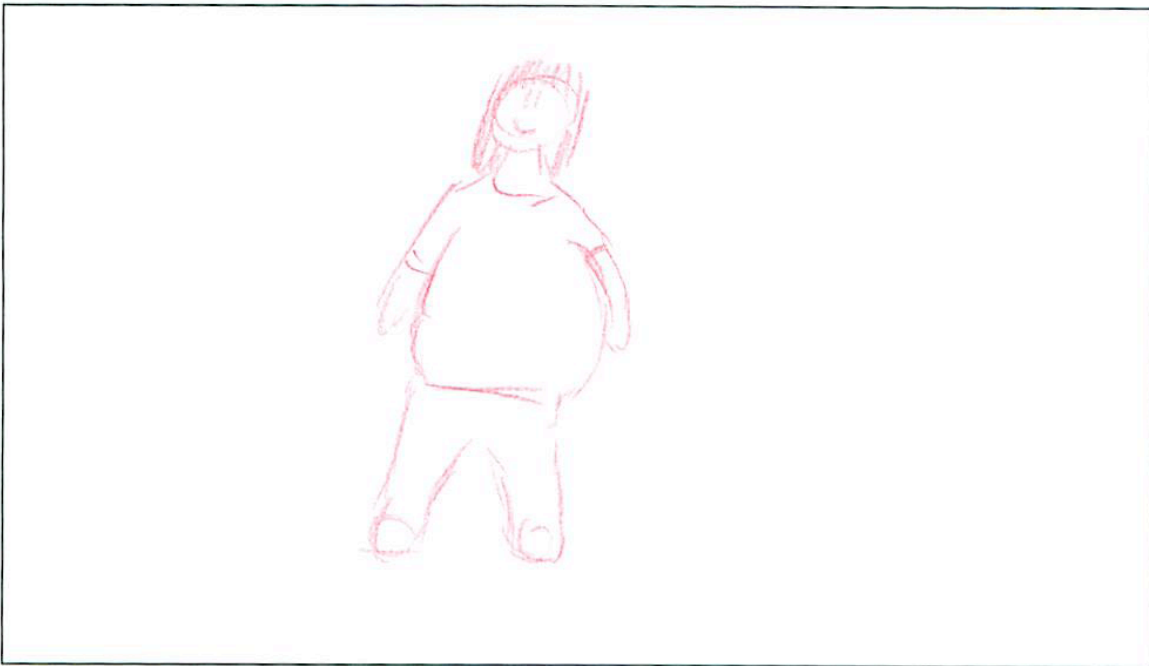


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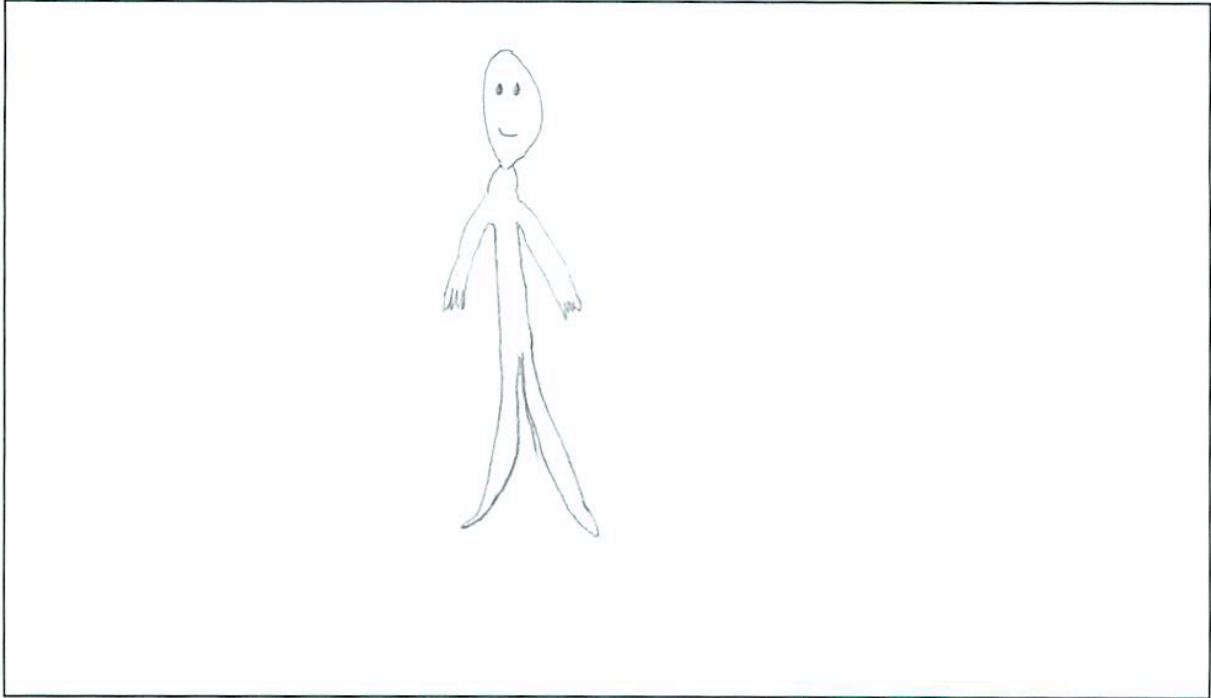


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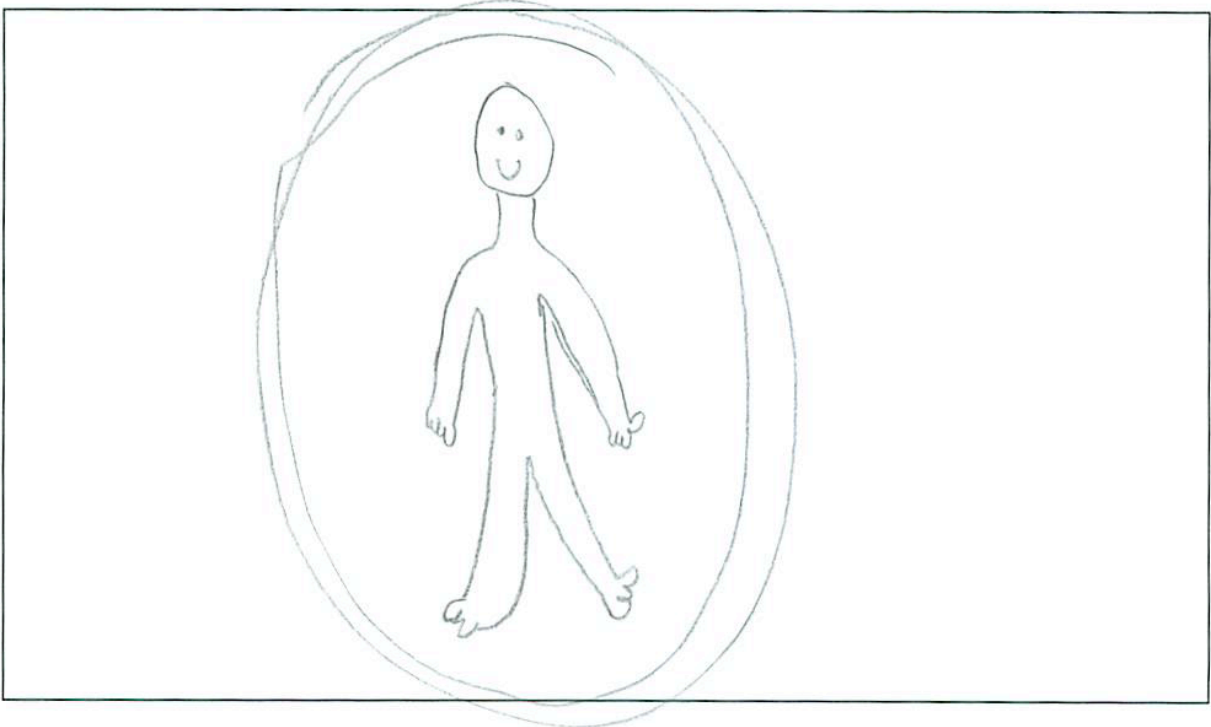


Participant #: 1, 1, 05

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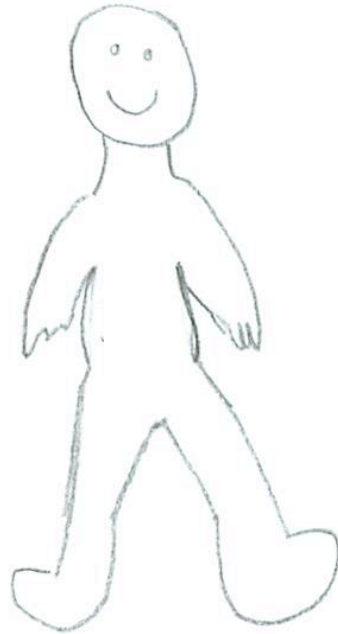


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



participant #: 1.1.0>

please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



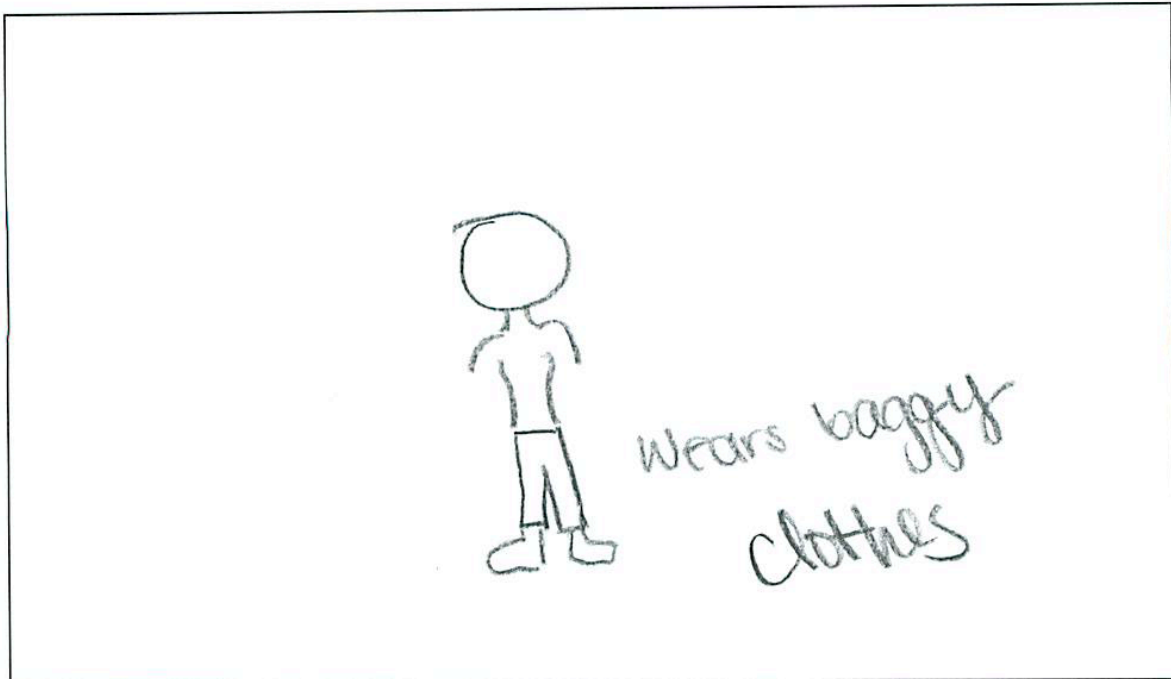
please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



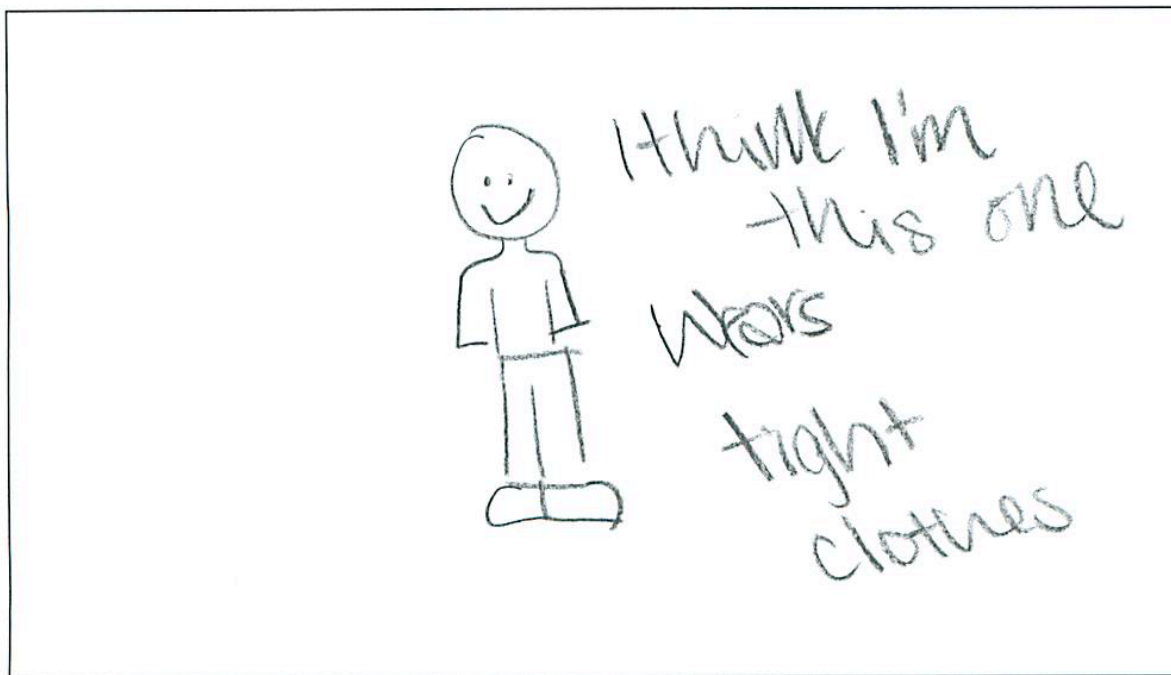


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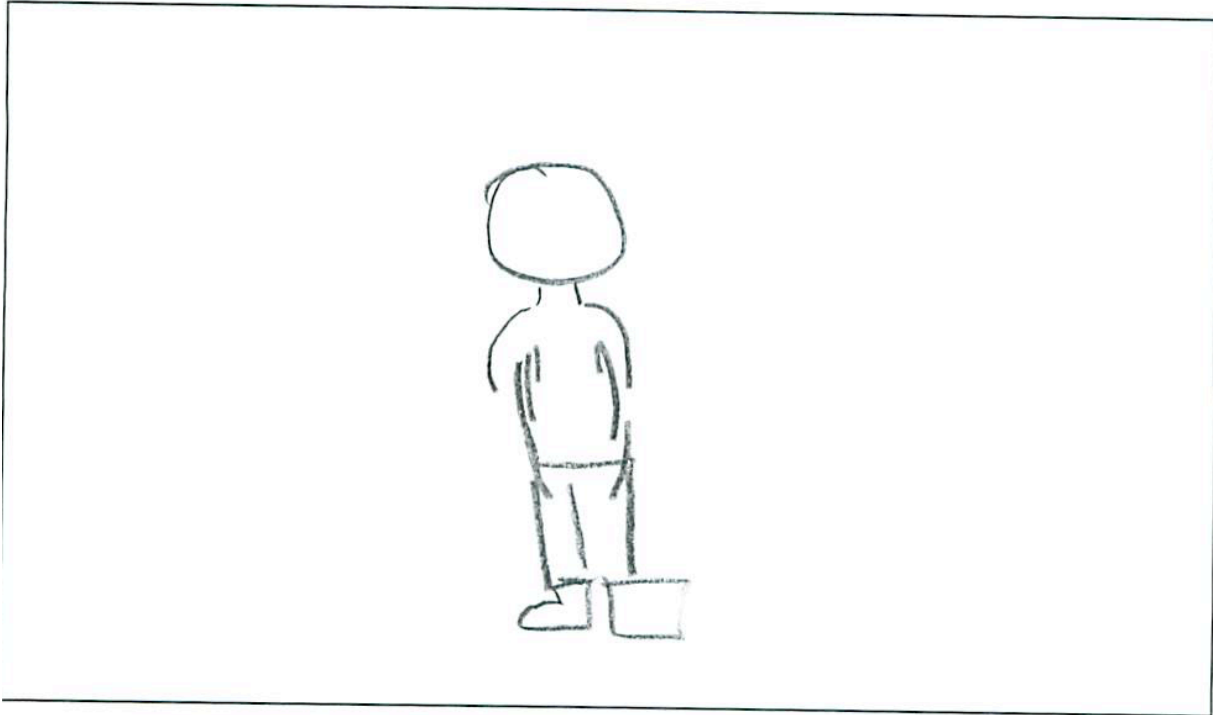


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

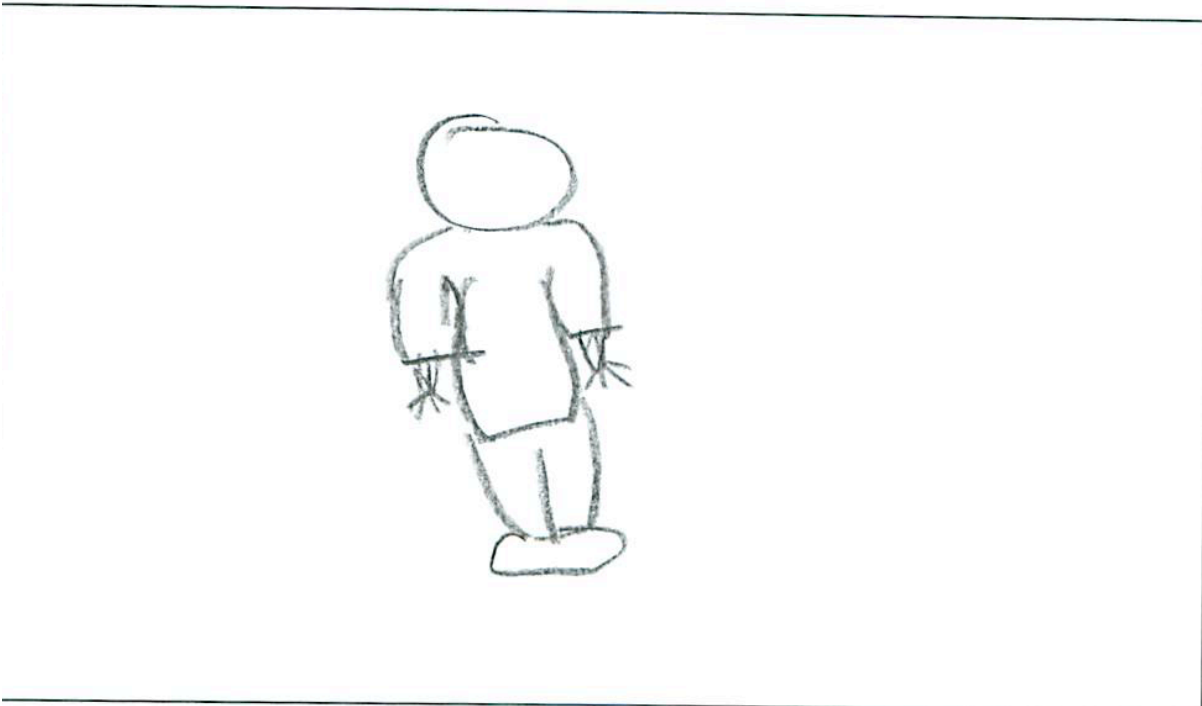


Participant #: 1,1,12

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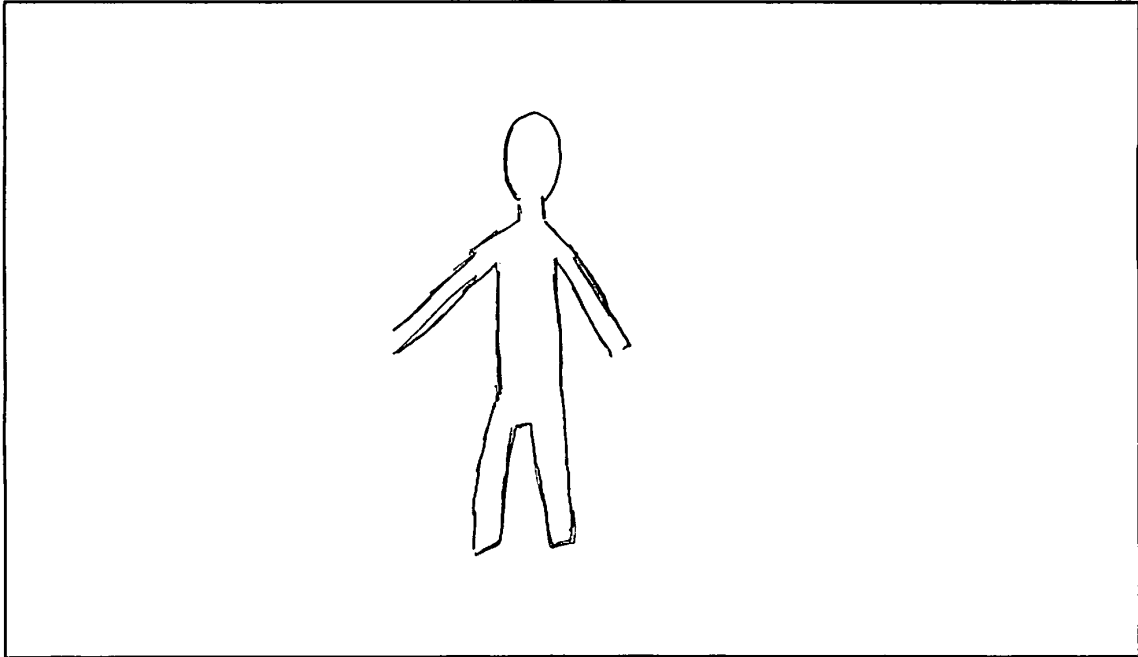


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

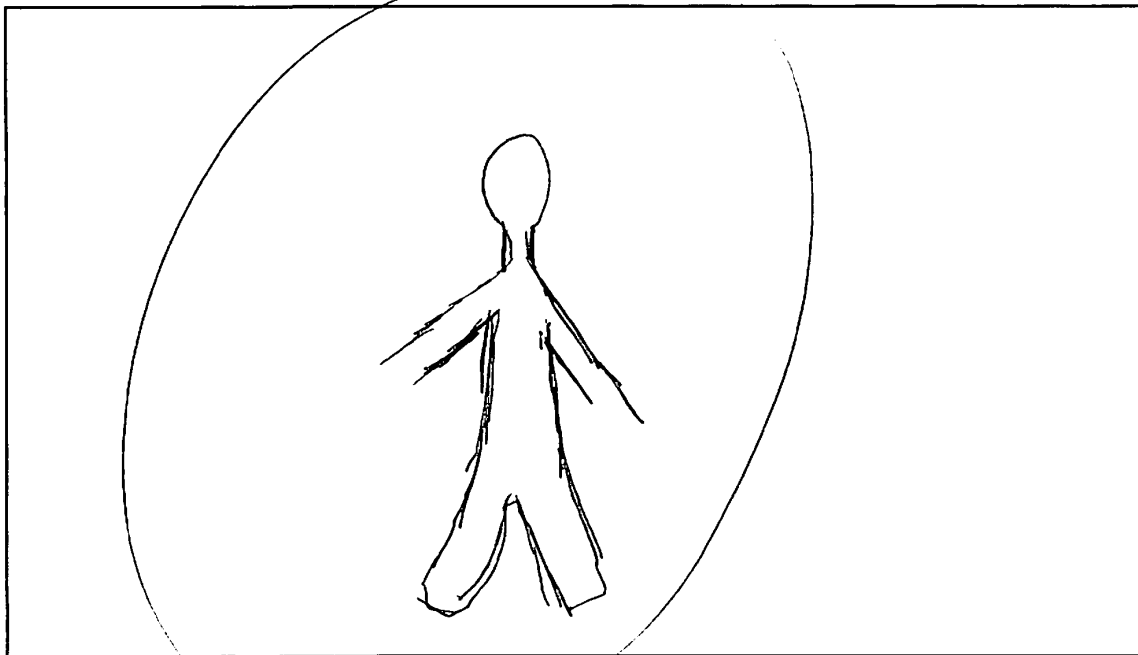


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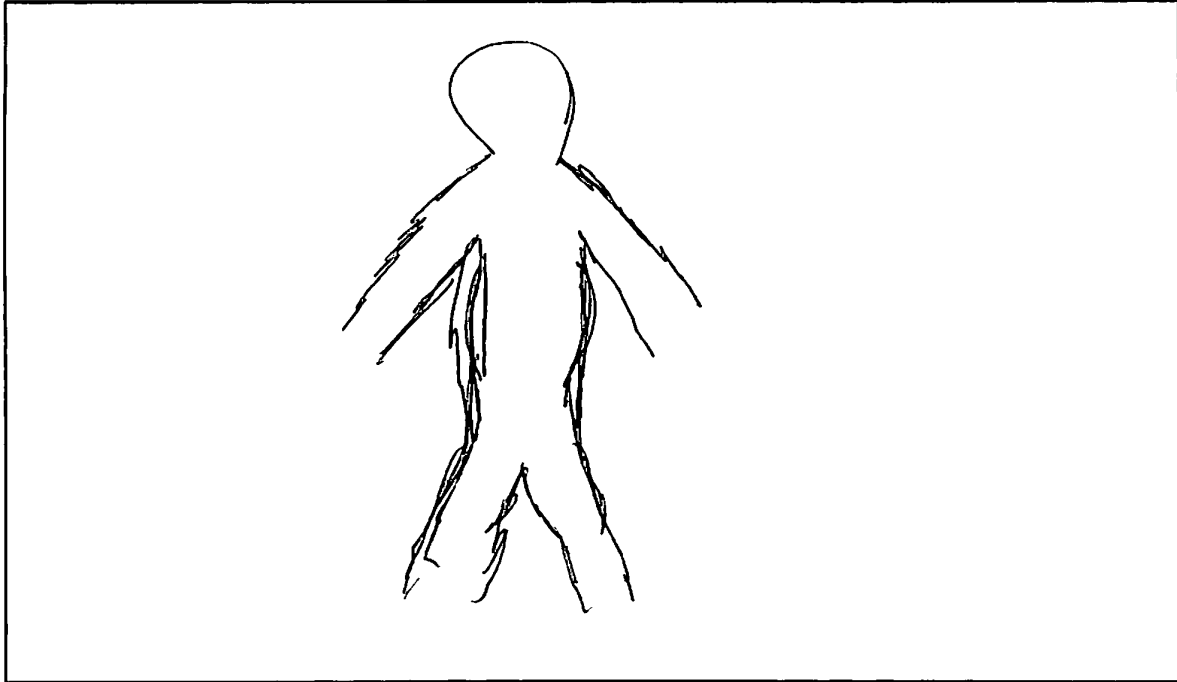


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

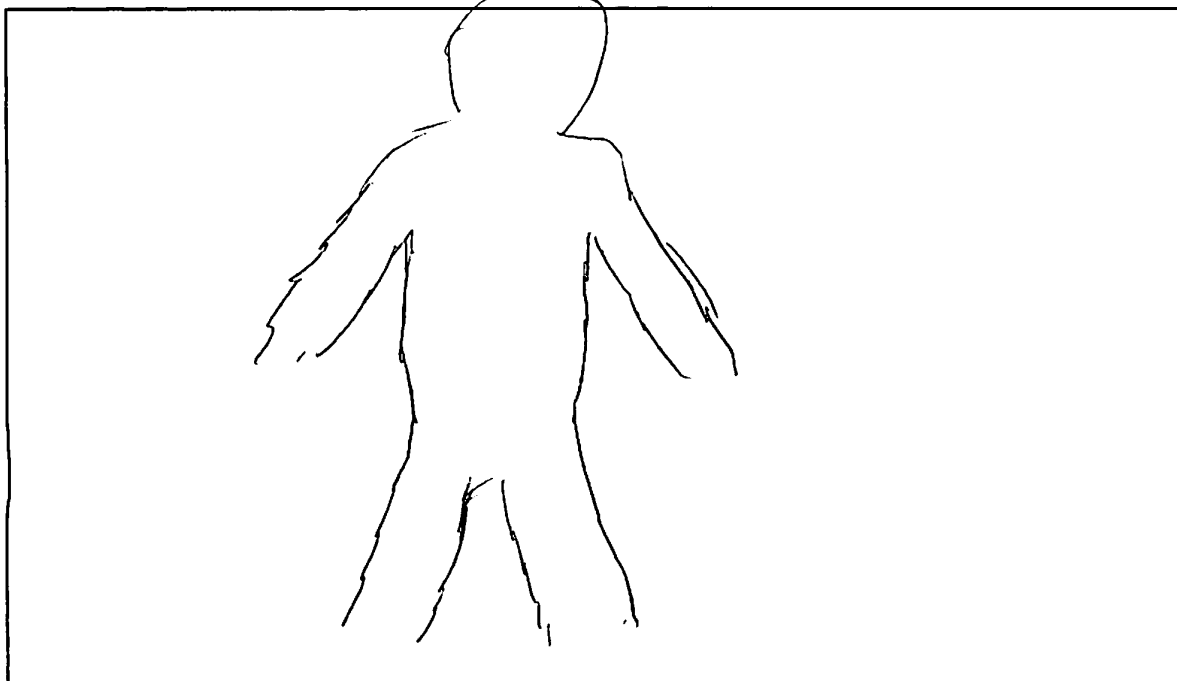


Participant #: 1.1.220

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

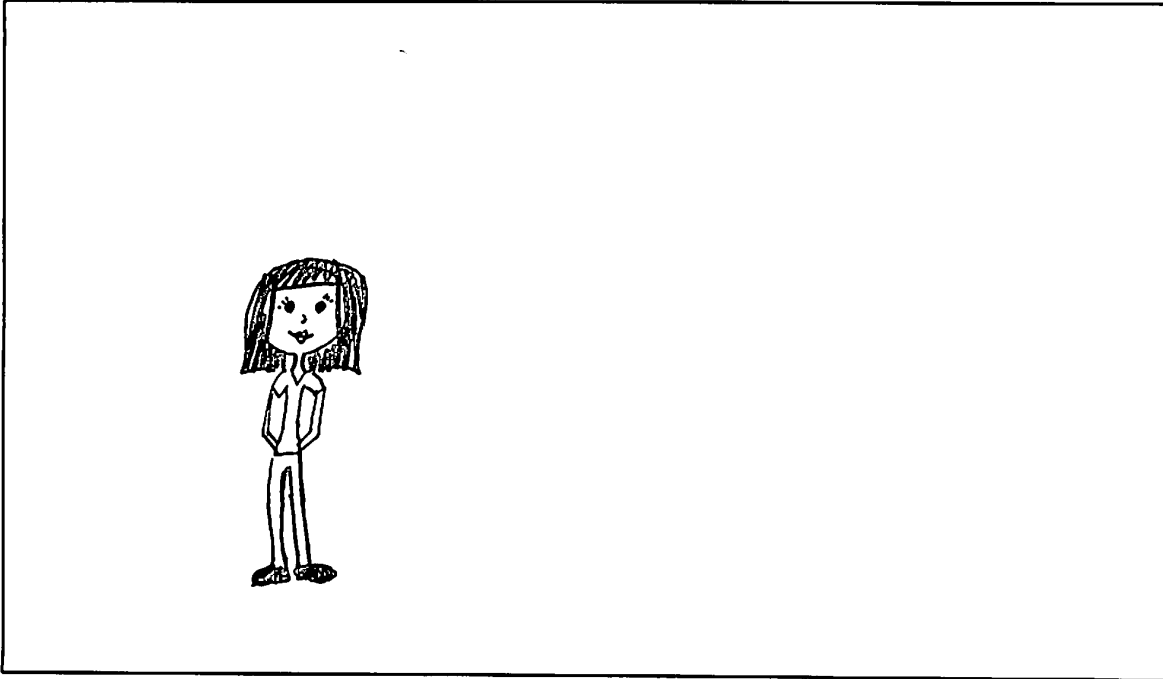


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

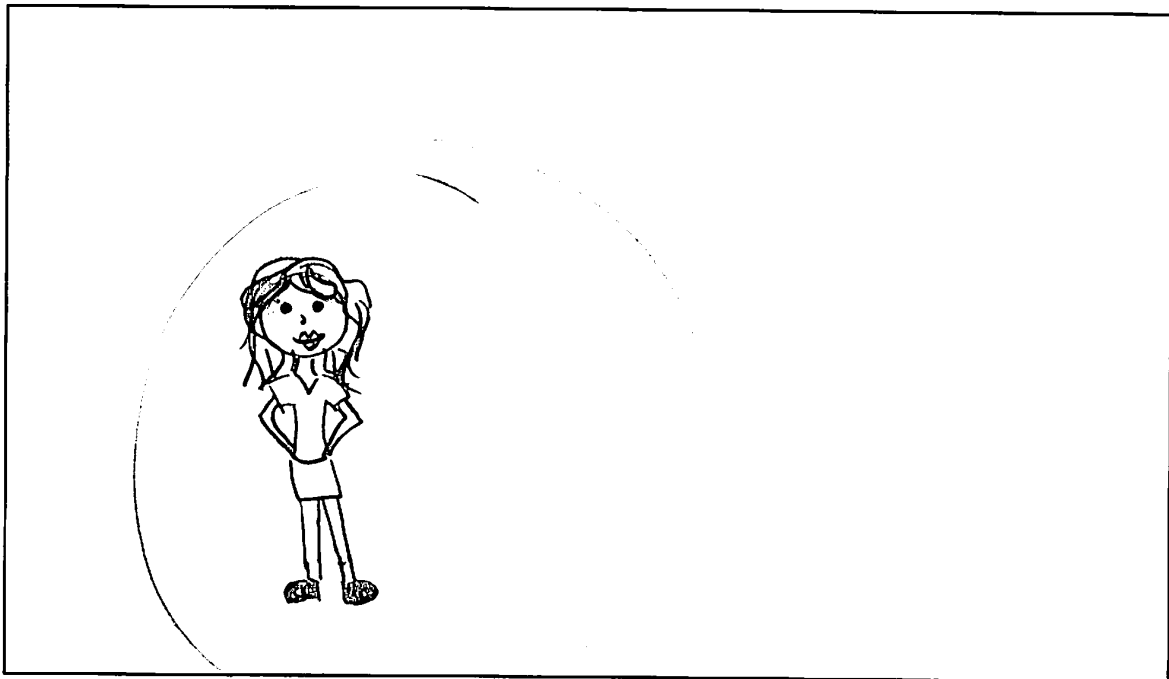


1, 1.98

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

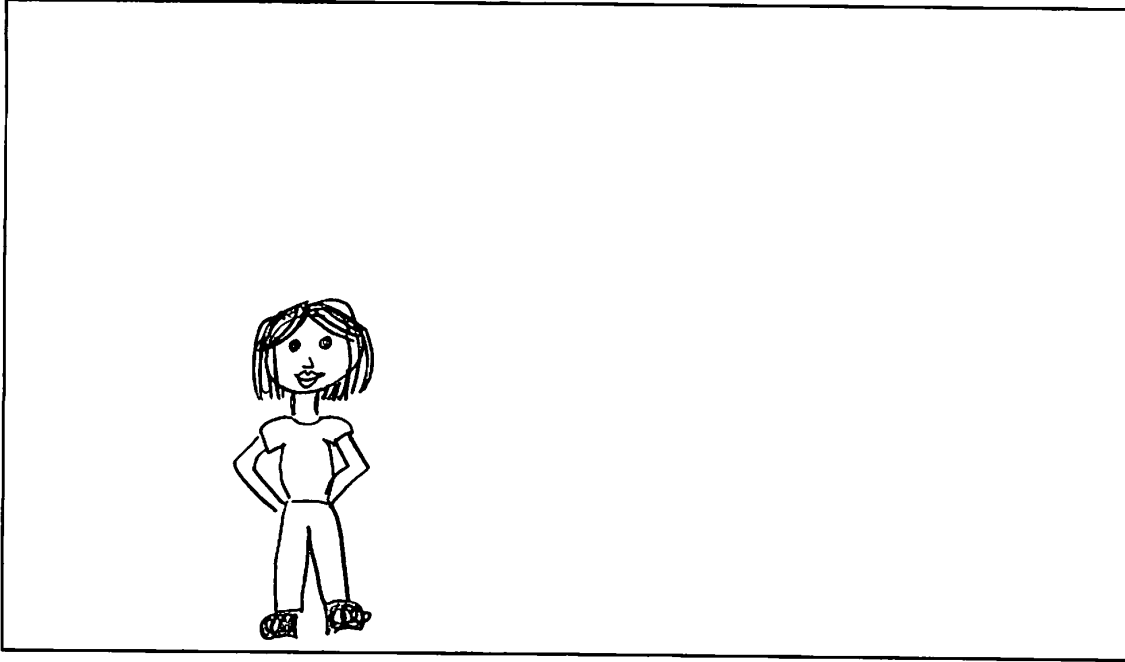


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



1.1.98

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

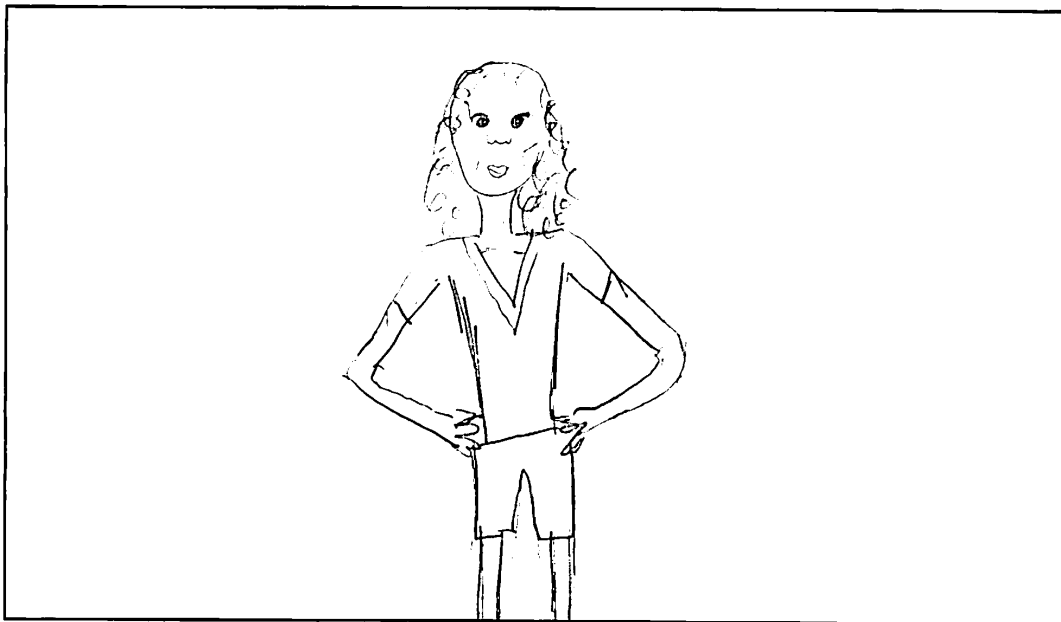


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

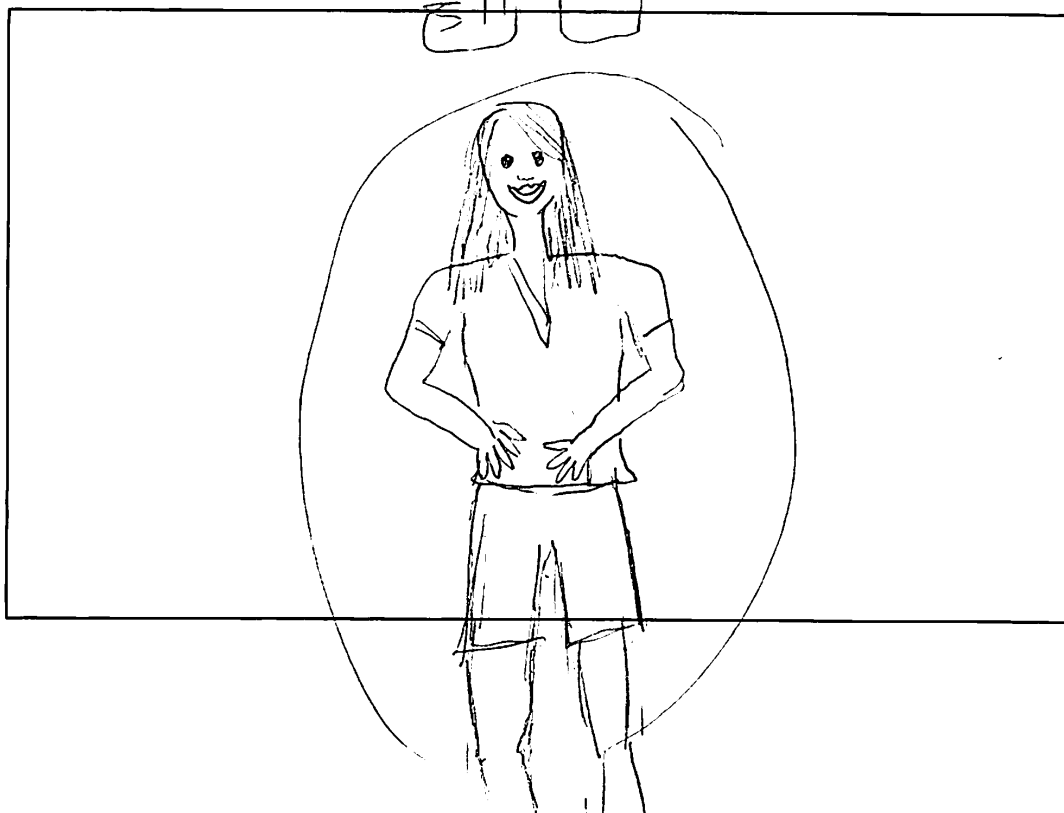


1.1.92

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

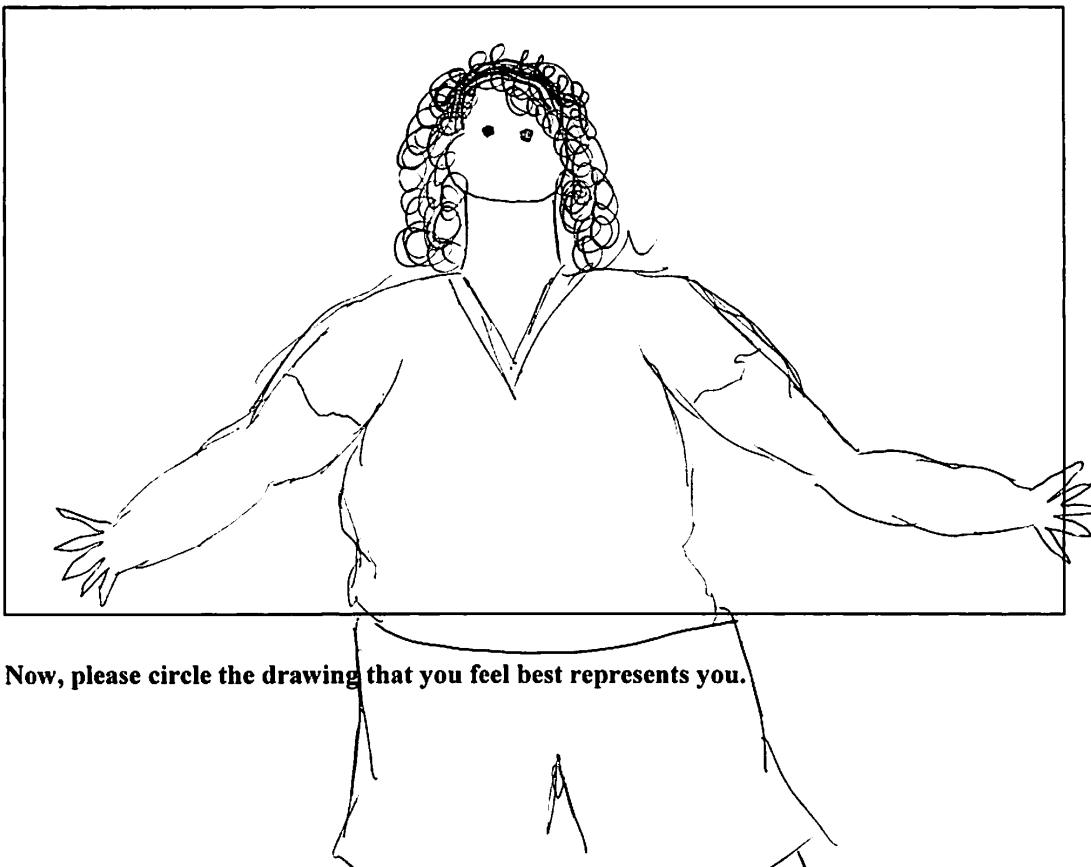


1.1.92

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

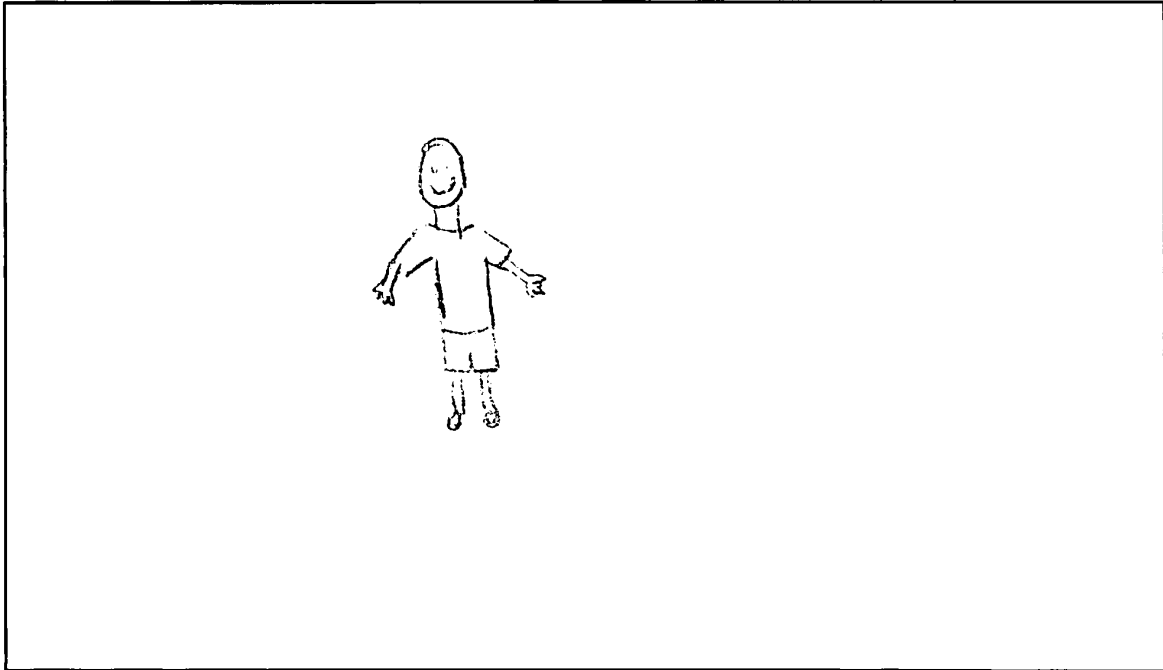


Now, please circle the drawing that you feel best represents you.

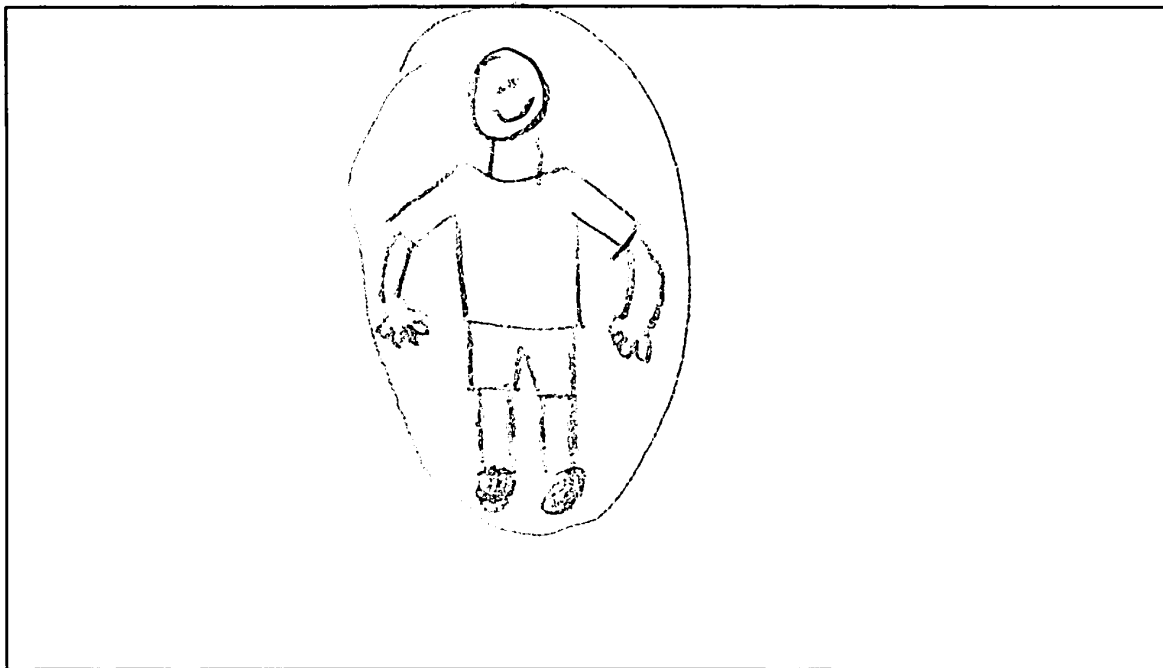


Participant #: 1, 1, 20

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

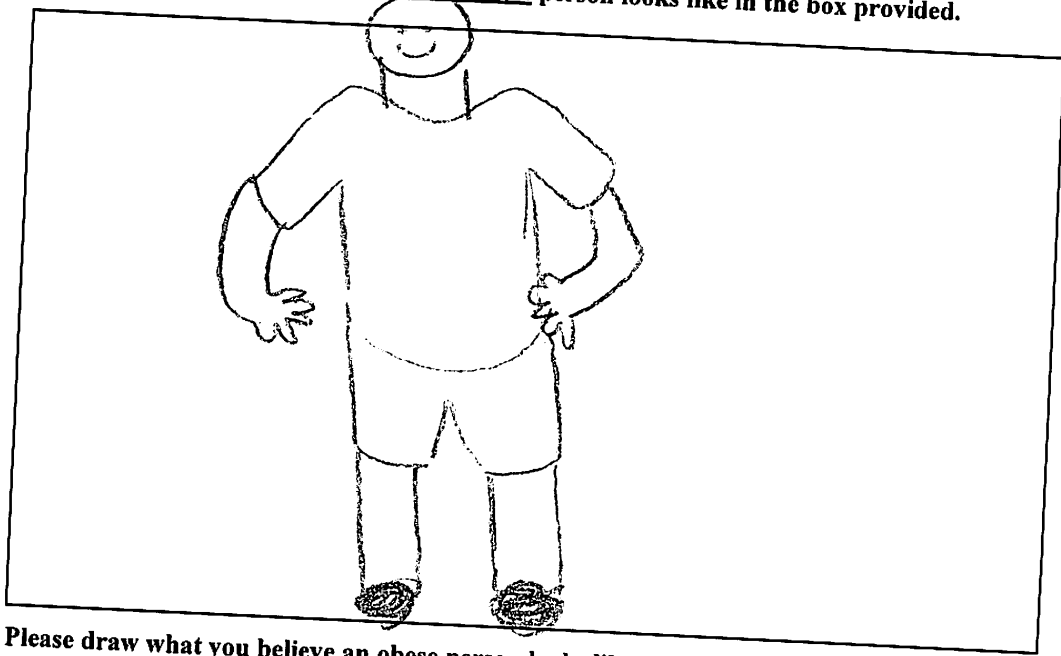


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

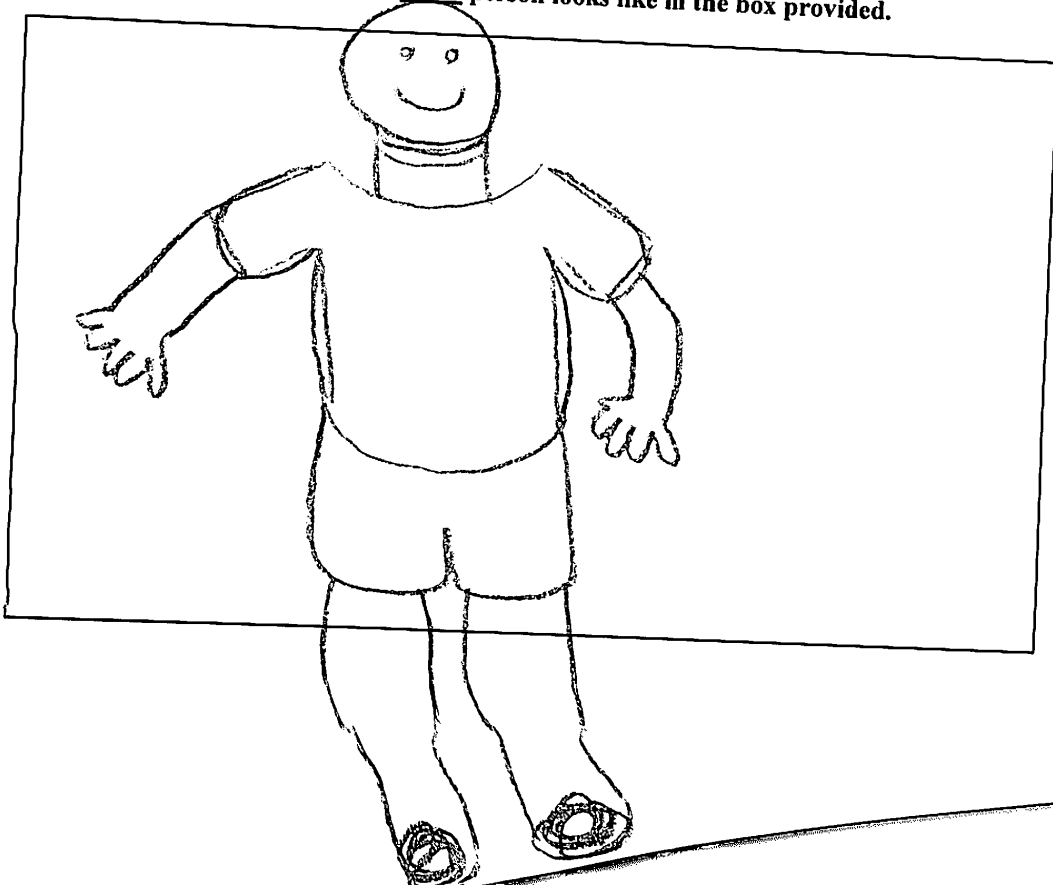


Participant #: 1.1.20

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

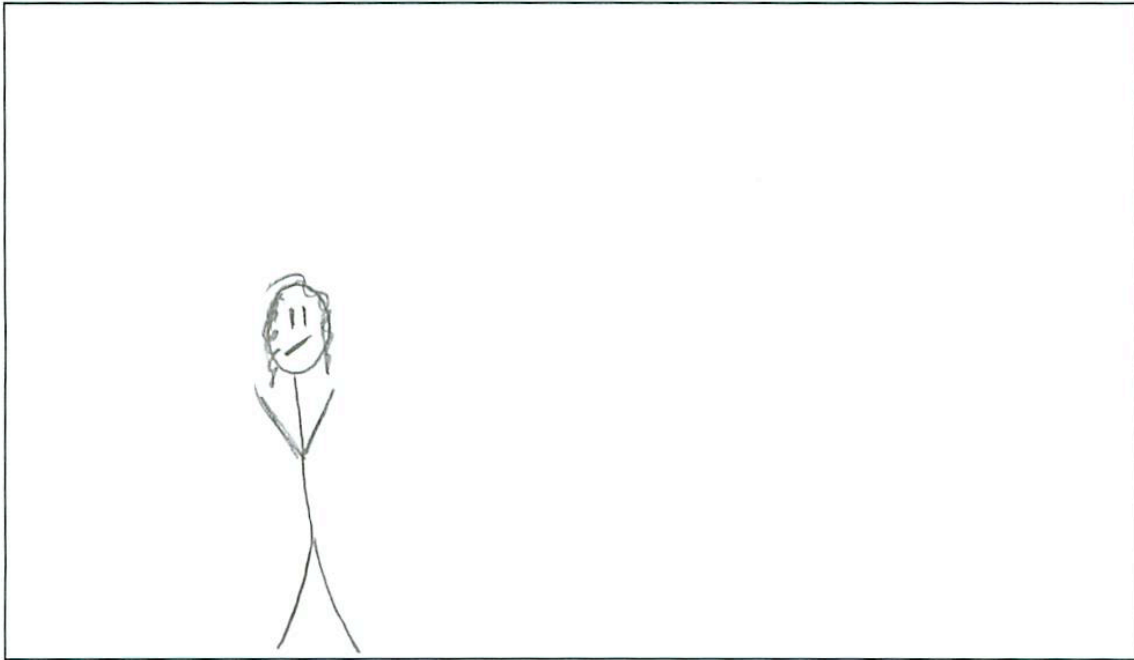


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.2,02

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

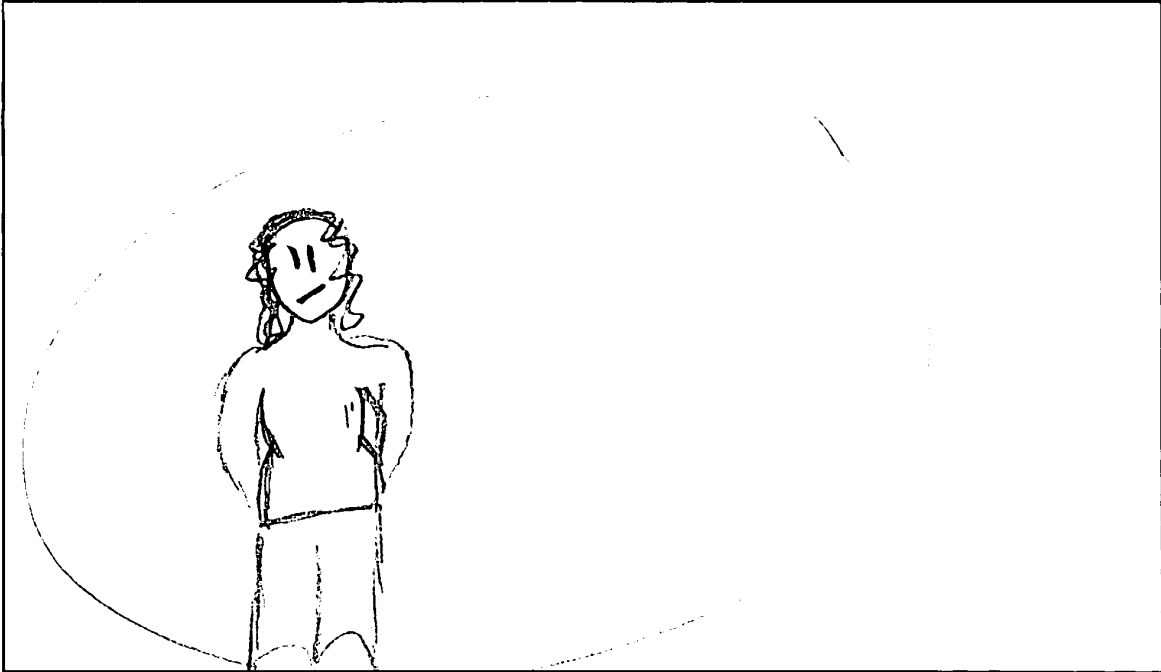


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

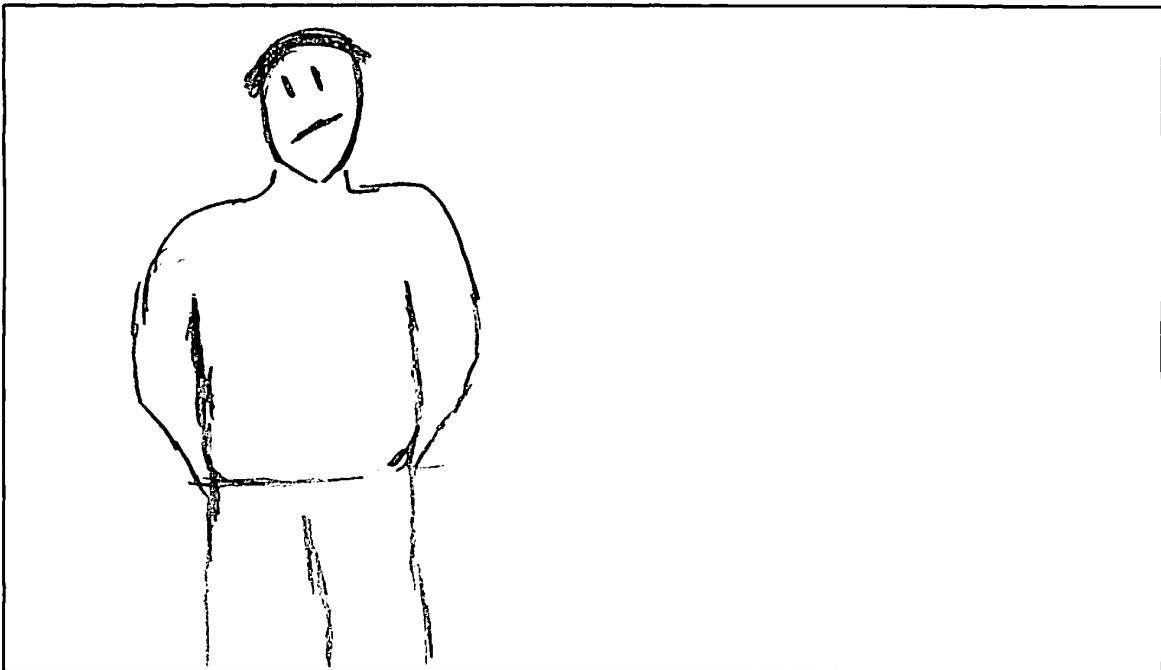


Participant #: 1.2.02

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

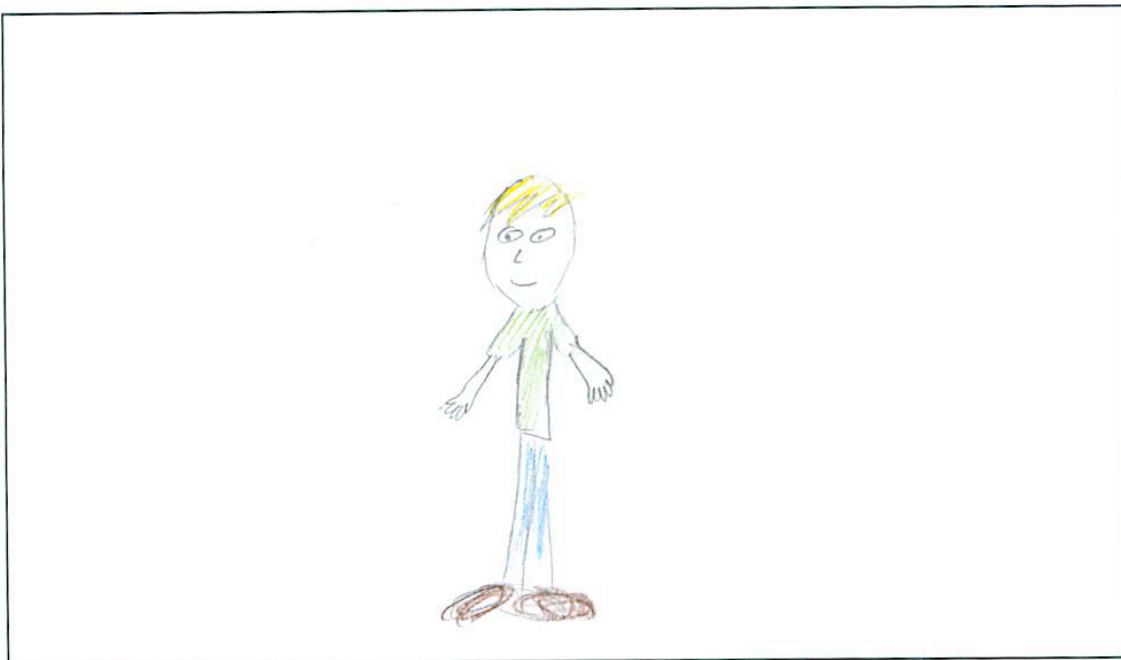


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



1.2.23

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

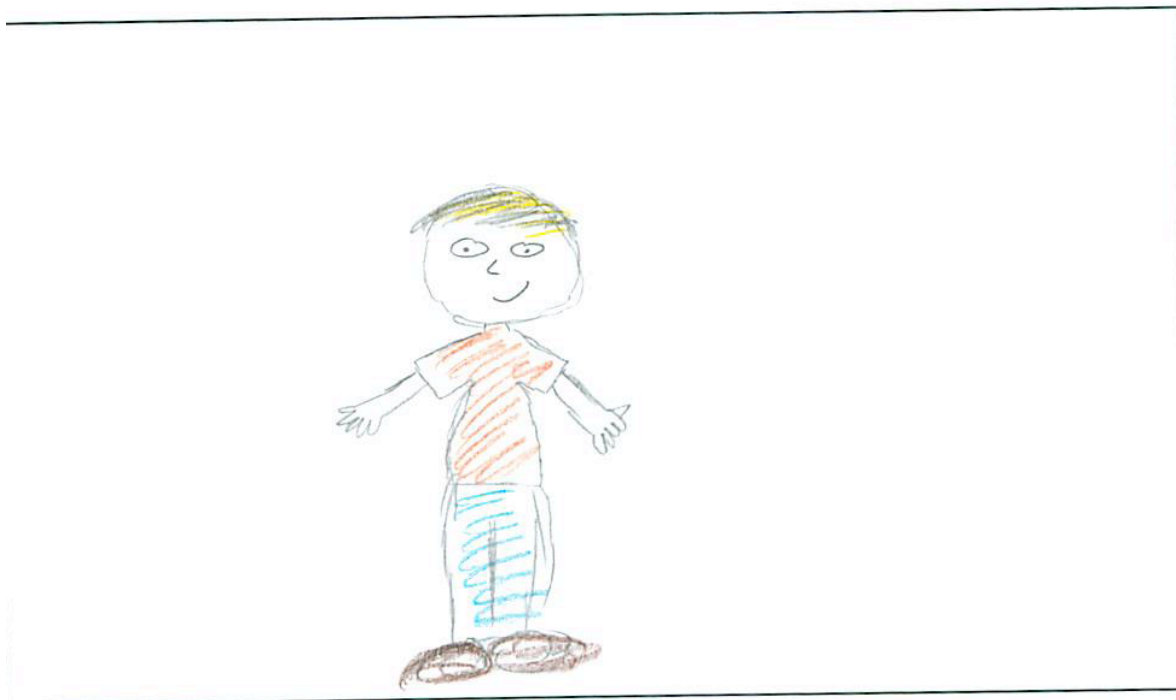


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



1.2.23

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

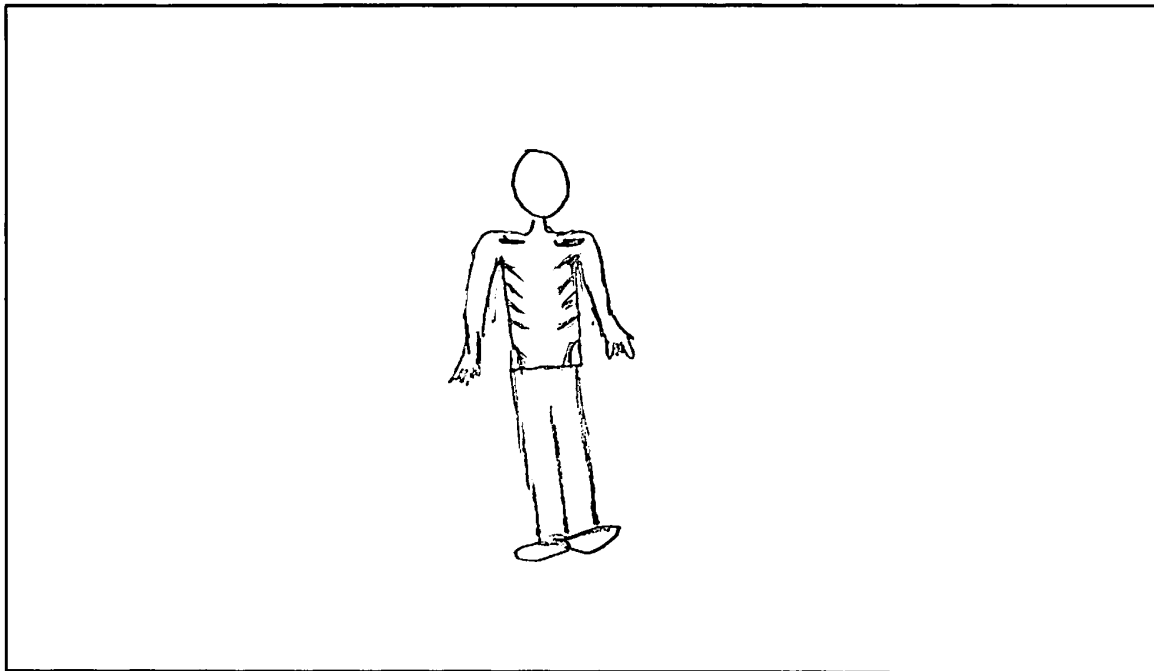


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

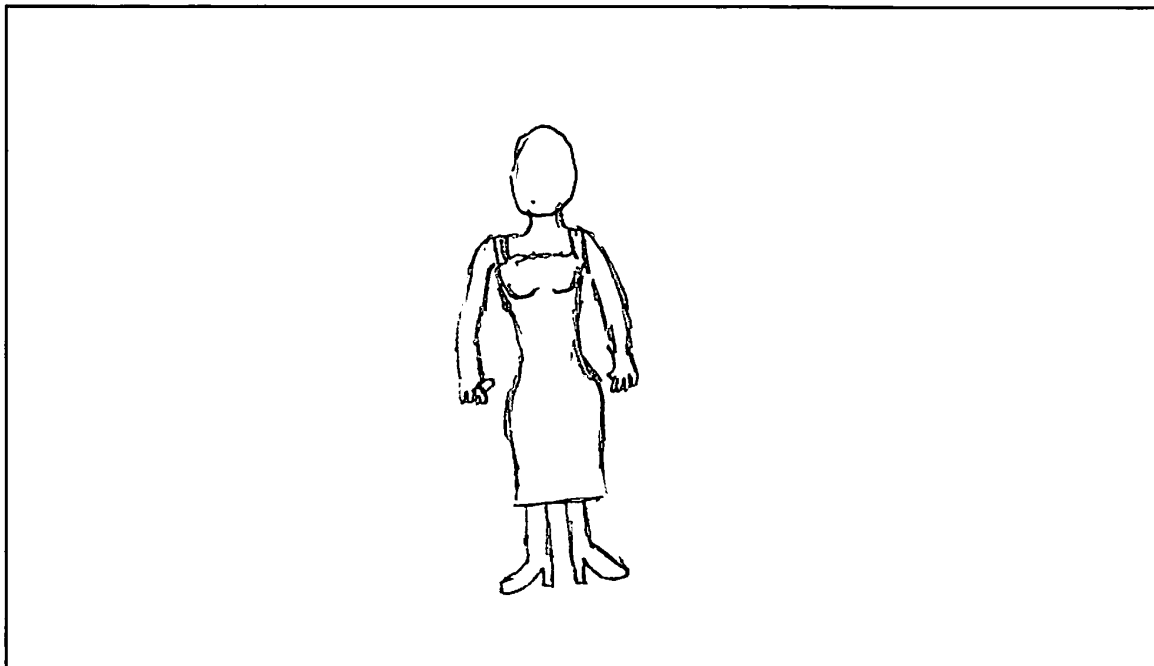


Participant #: 1.2.24

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

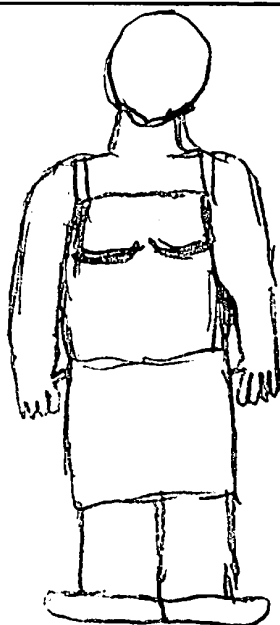


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

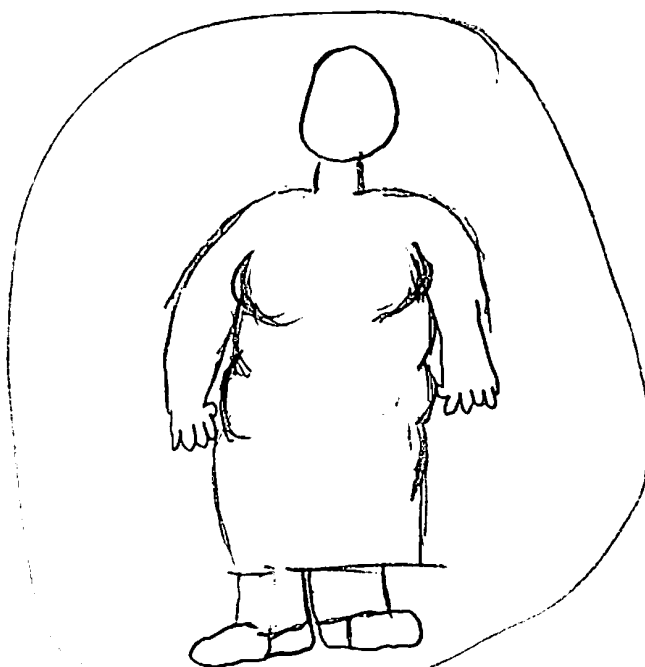


Participant #: 1.2.24

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



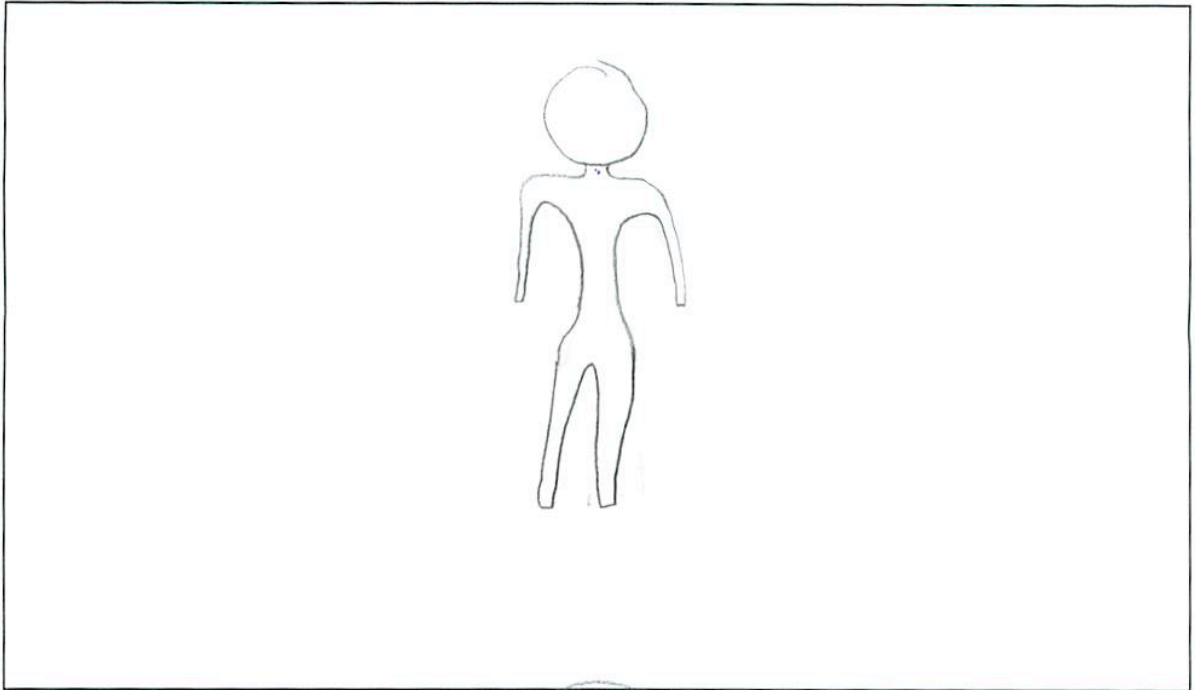
Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



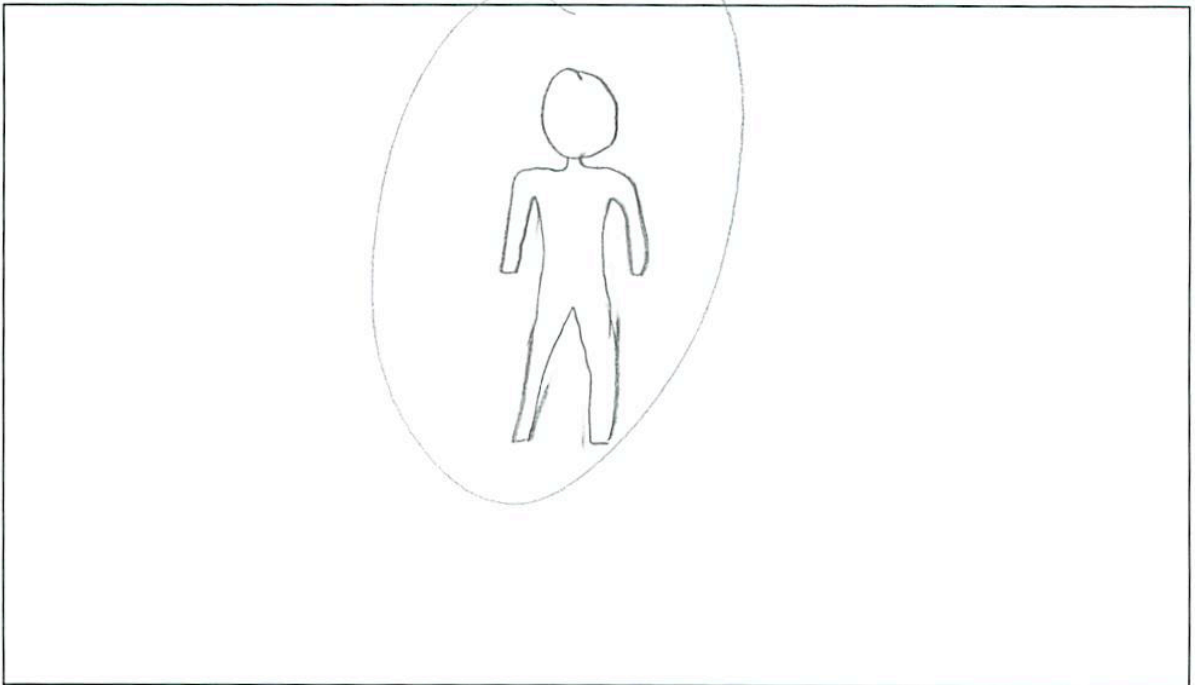


Participant #: 1.2.33

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

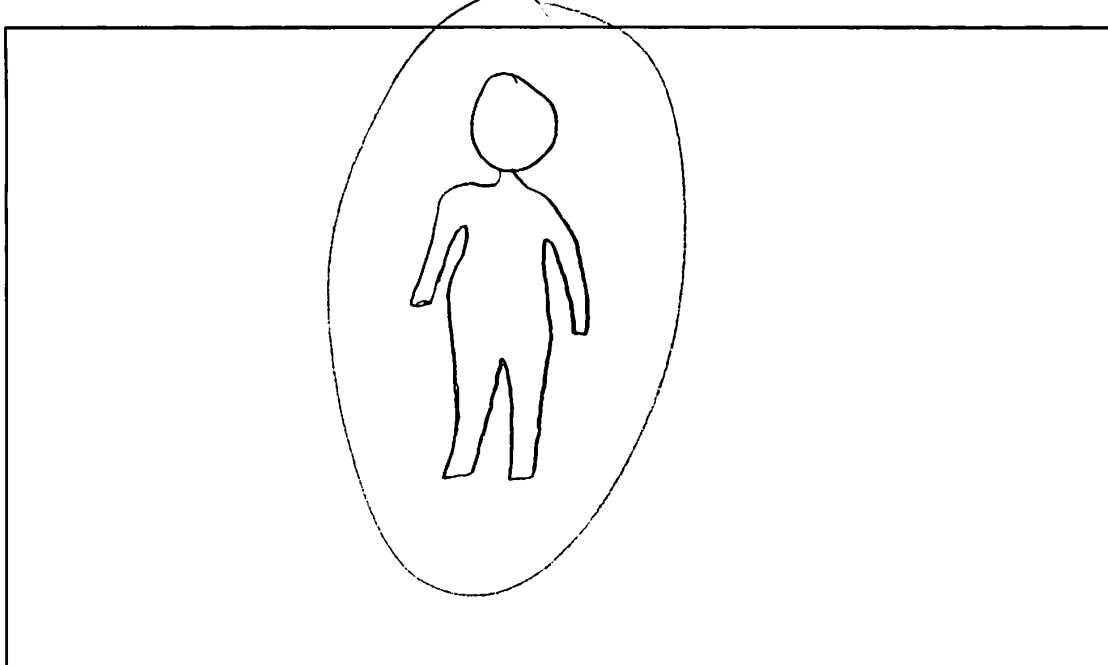


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

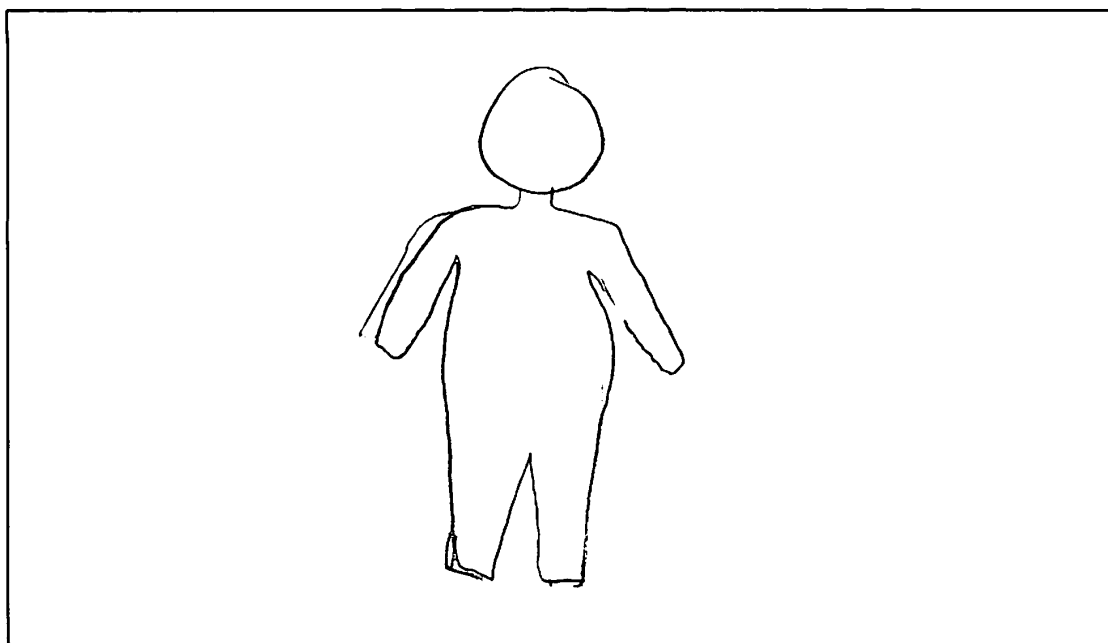


Participant #: 1, 2, 33

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

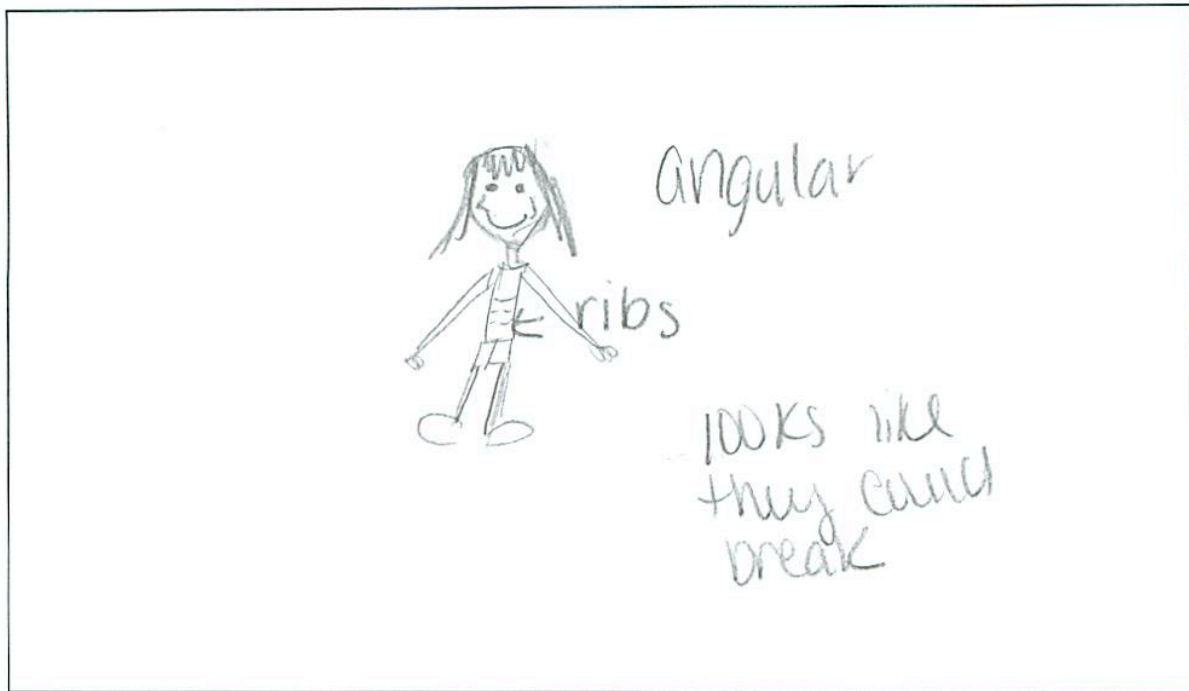


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

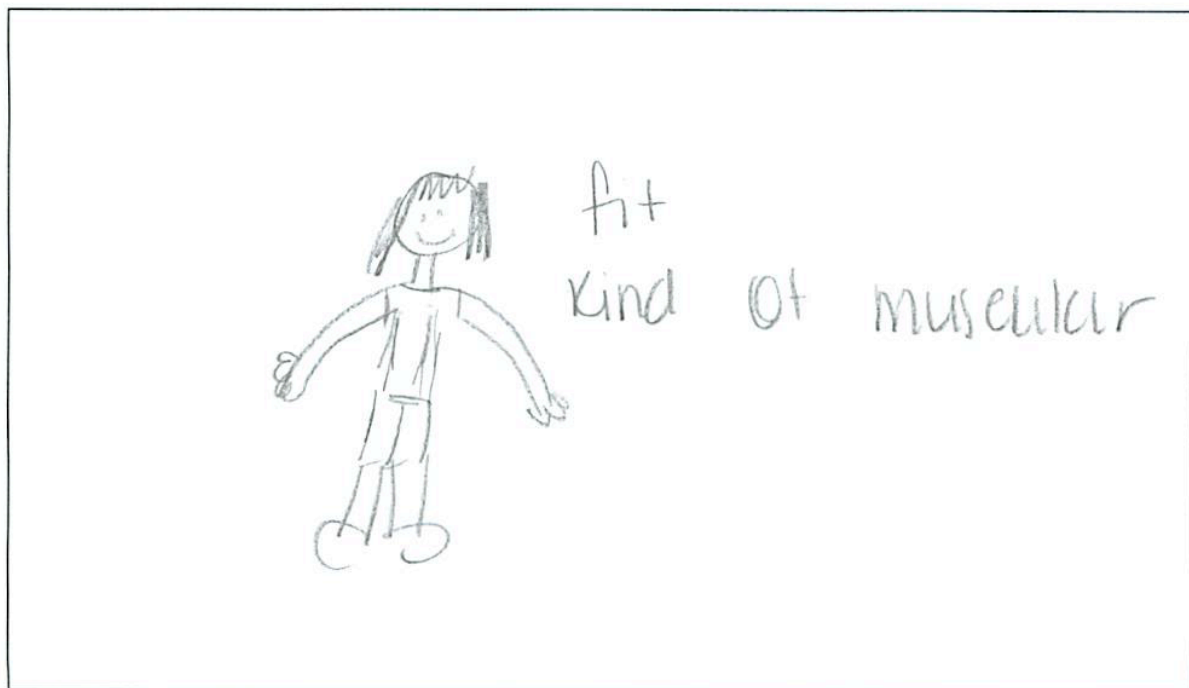


Participant #: 1, 2, 34

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.2.34

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

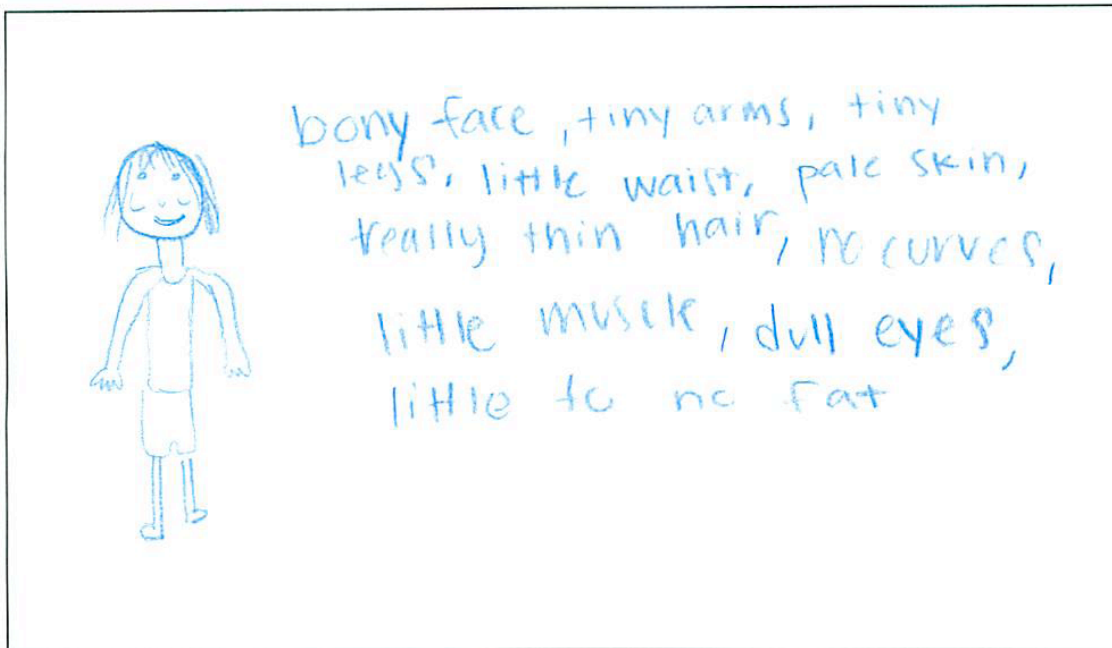


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

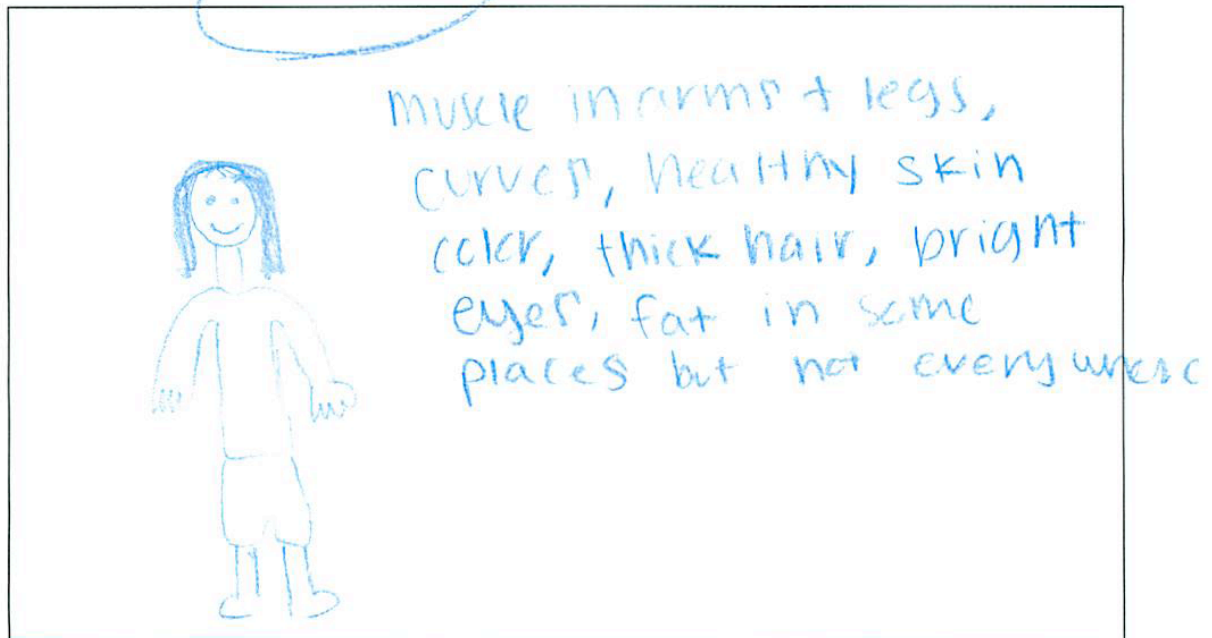


Participant #: 1, 2, 22

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

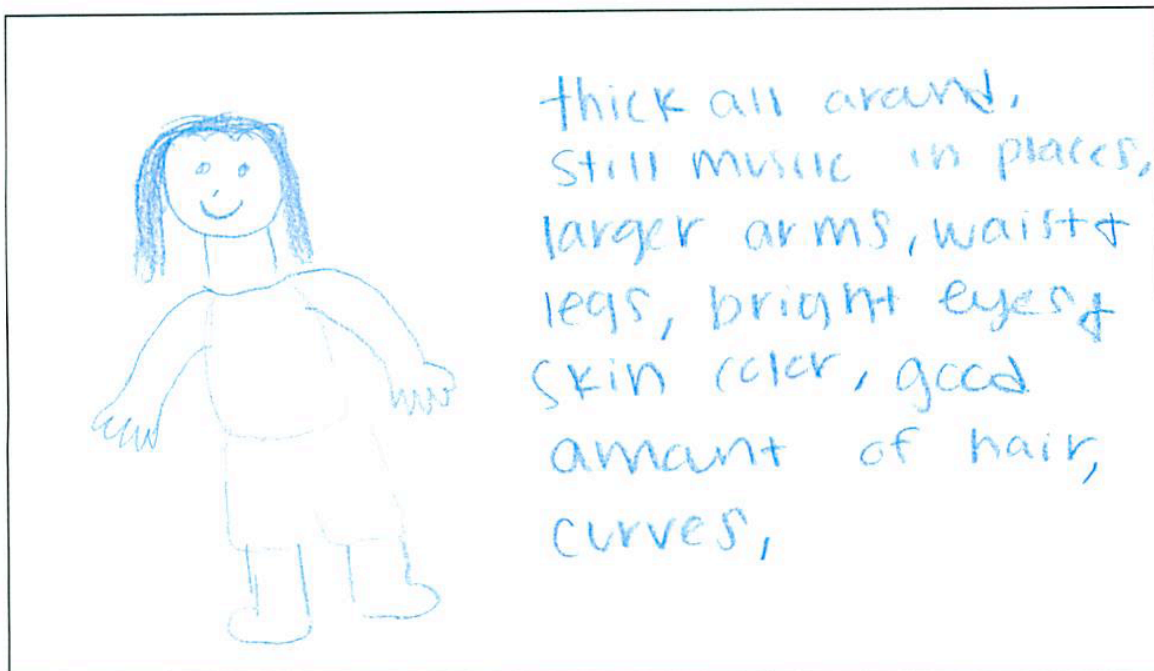


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

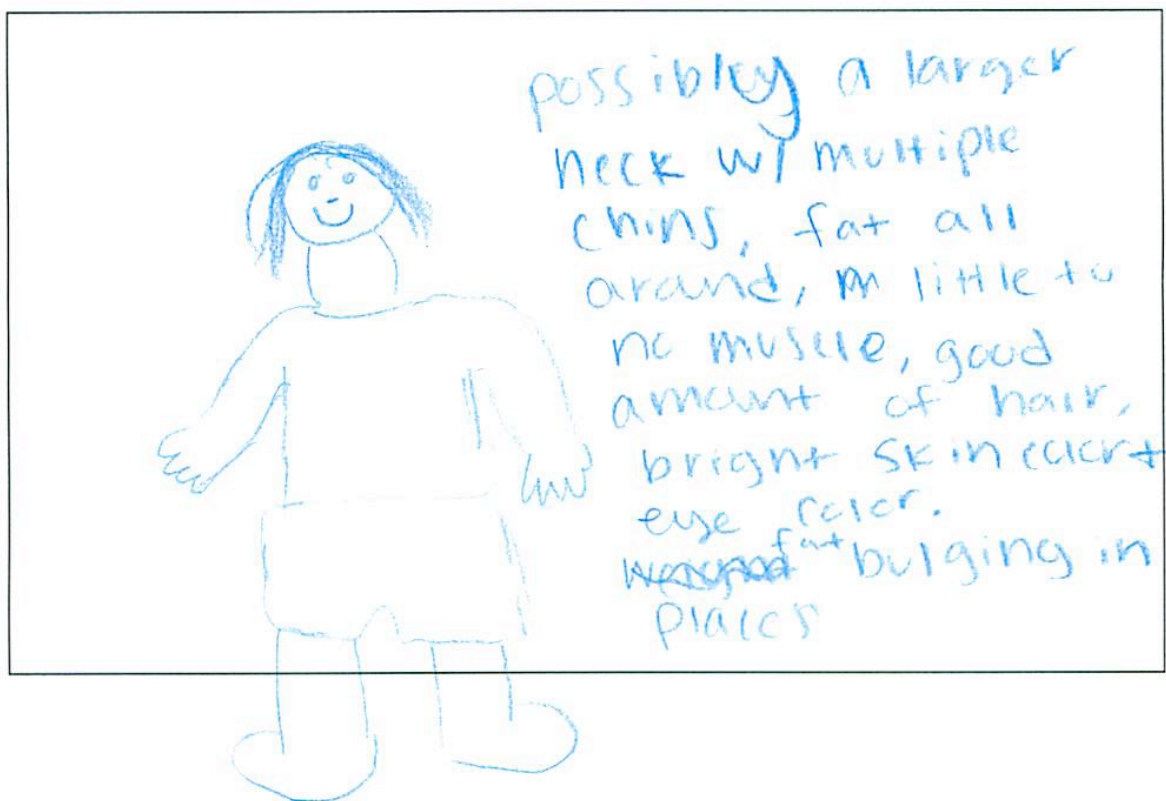


Participant #: 1. 2. 22

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

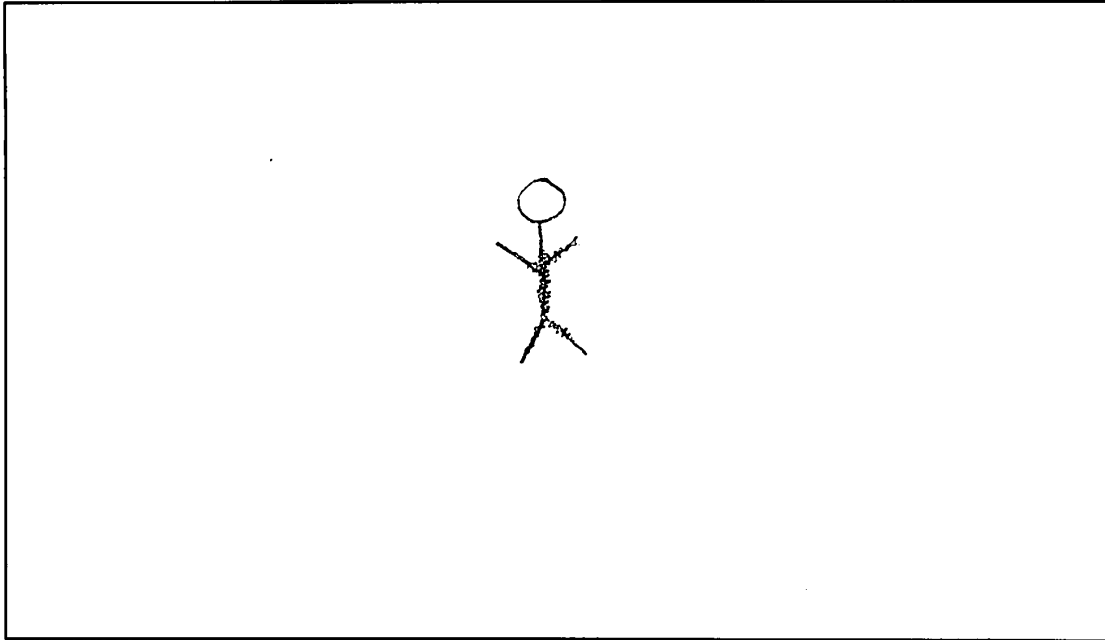


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

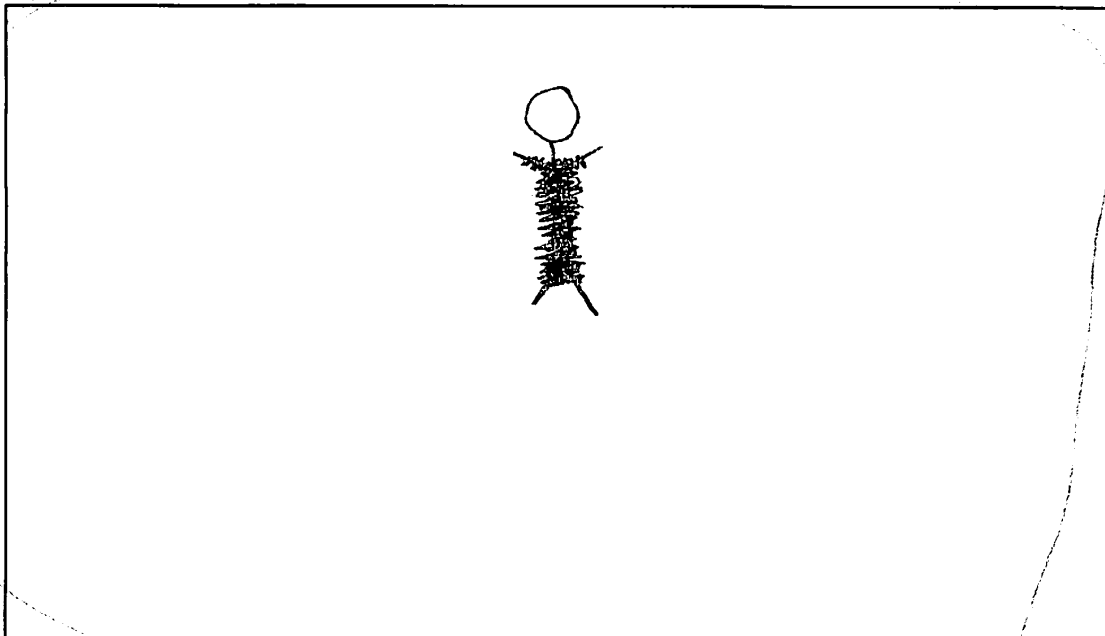


Participant #: 1. 2. 26

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

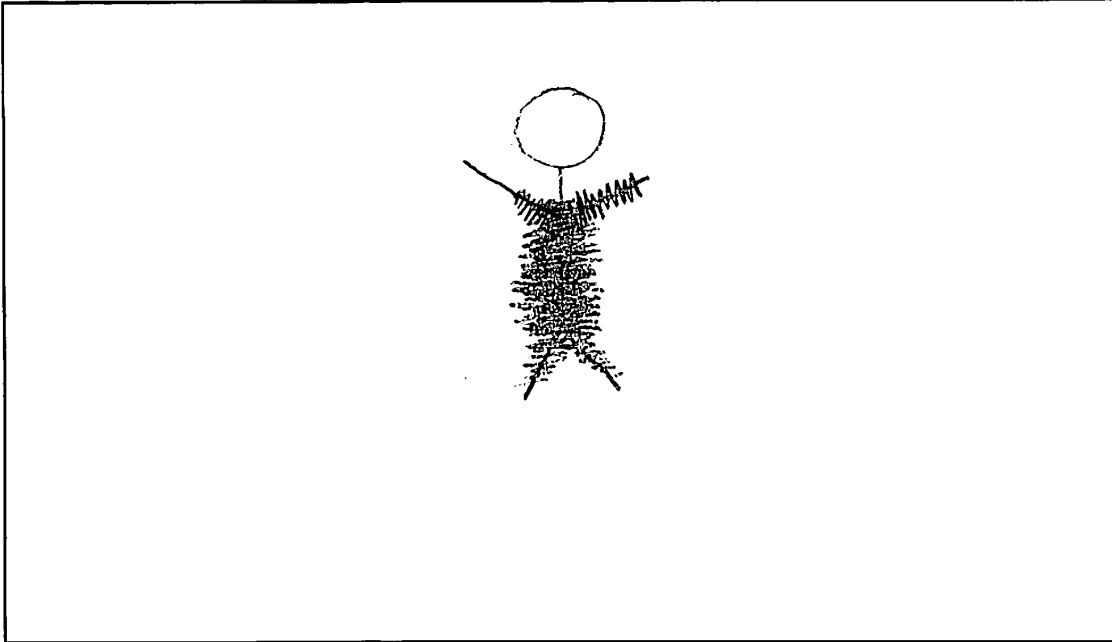


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

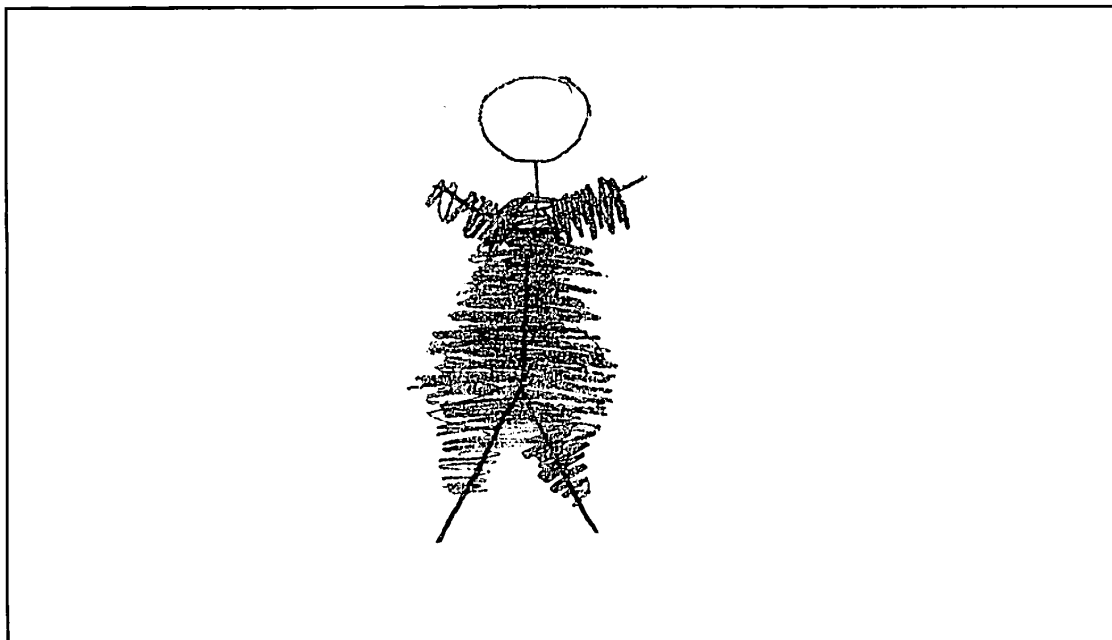


Participant #: 1,2,26

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



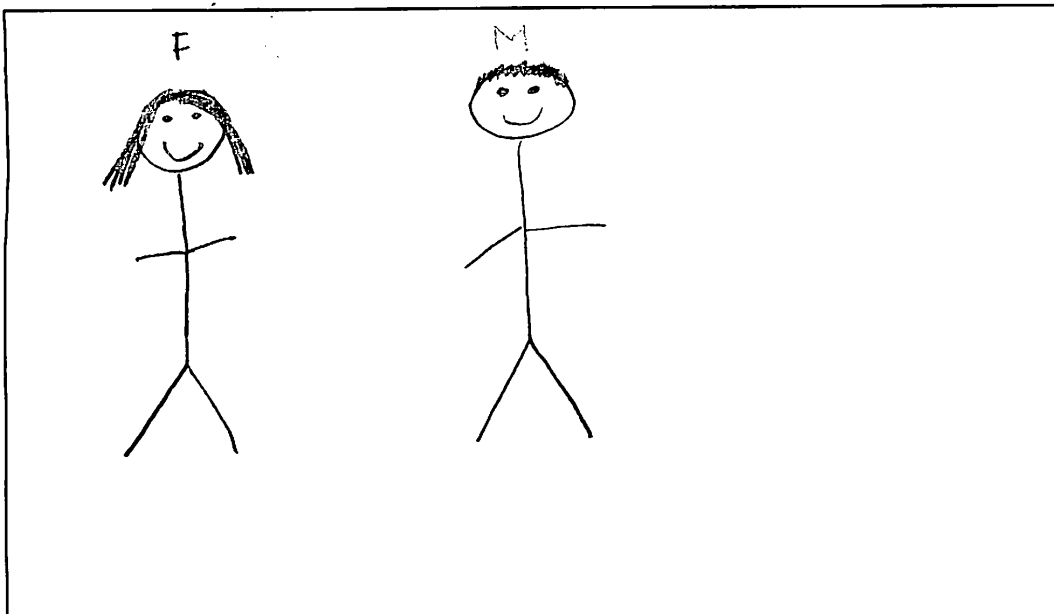
Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.



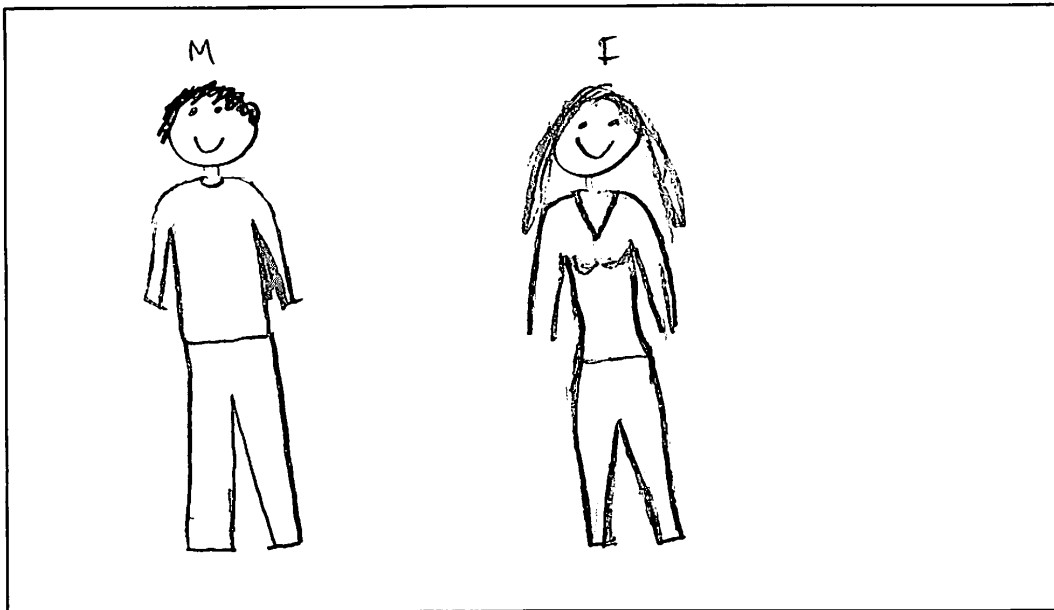


Participant #.

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

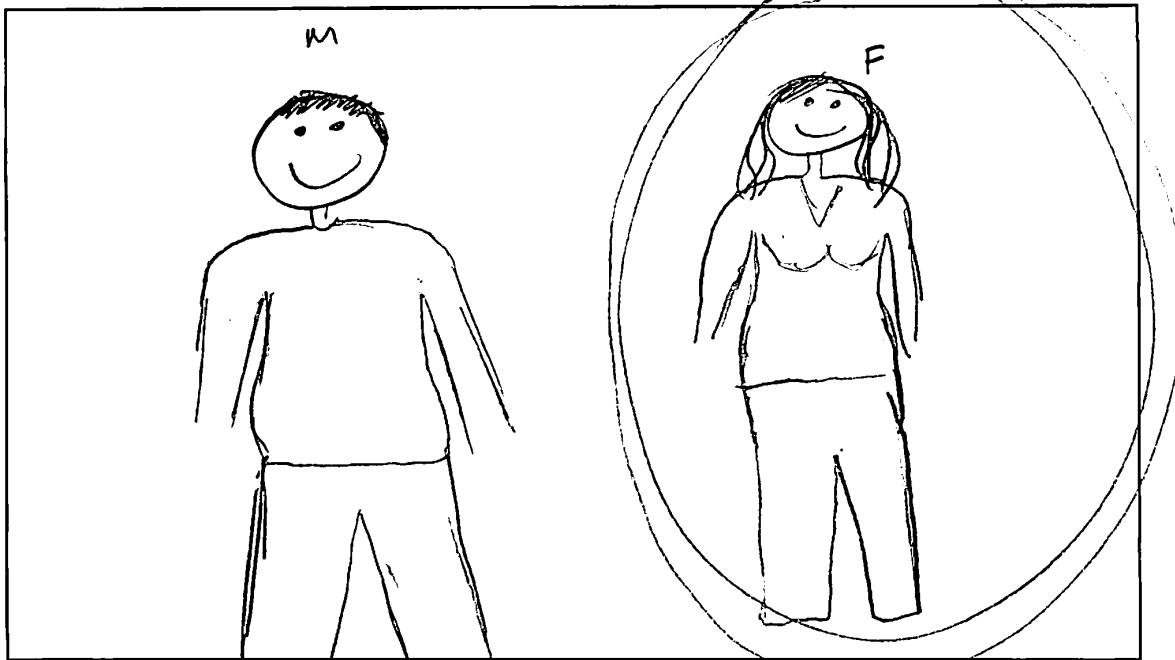


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

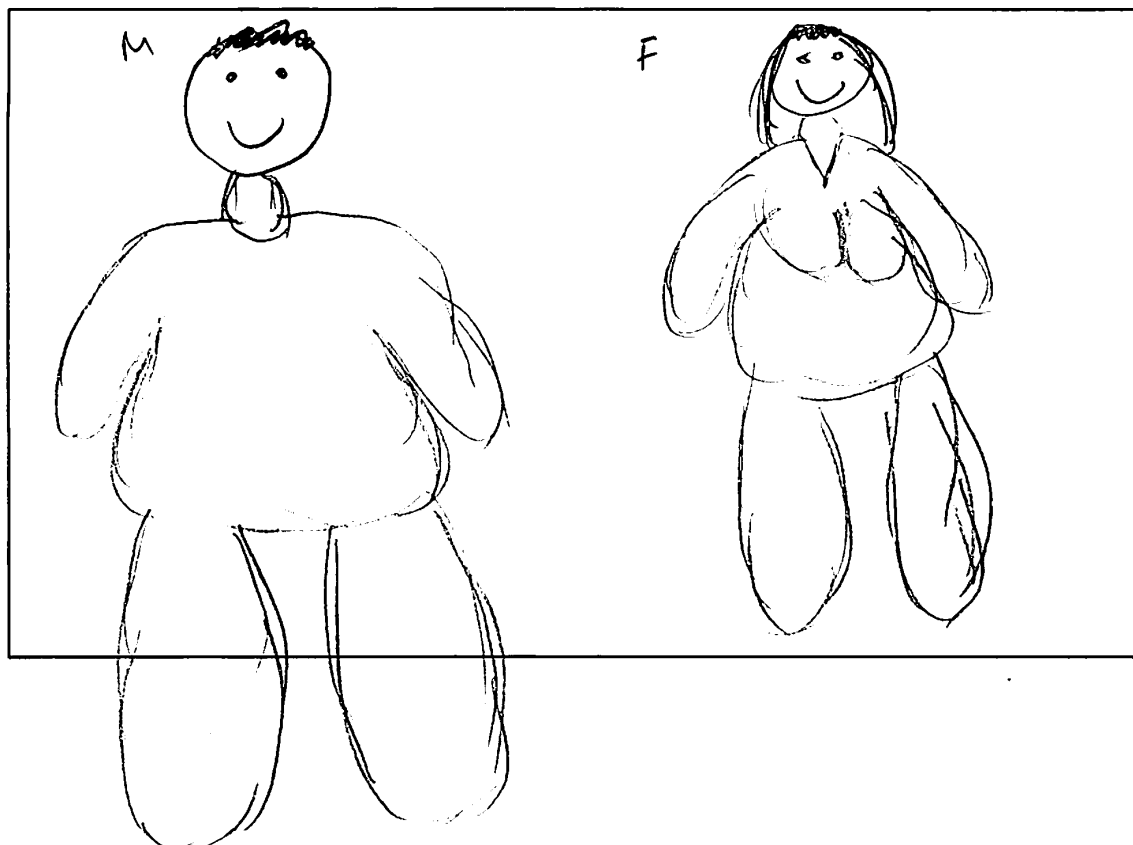


Participant #: 1014

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

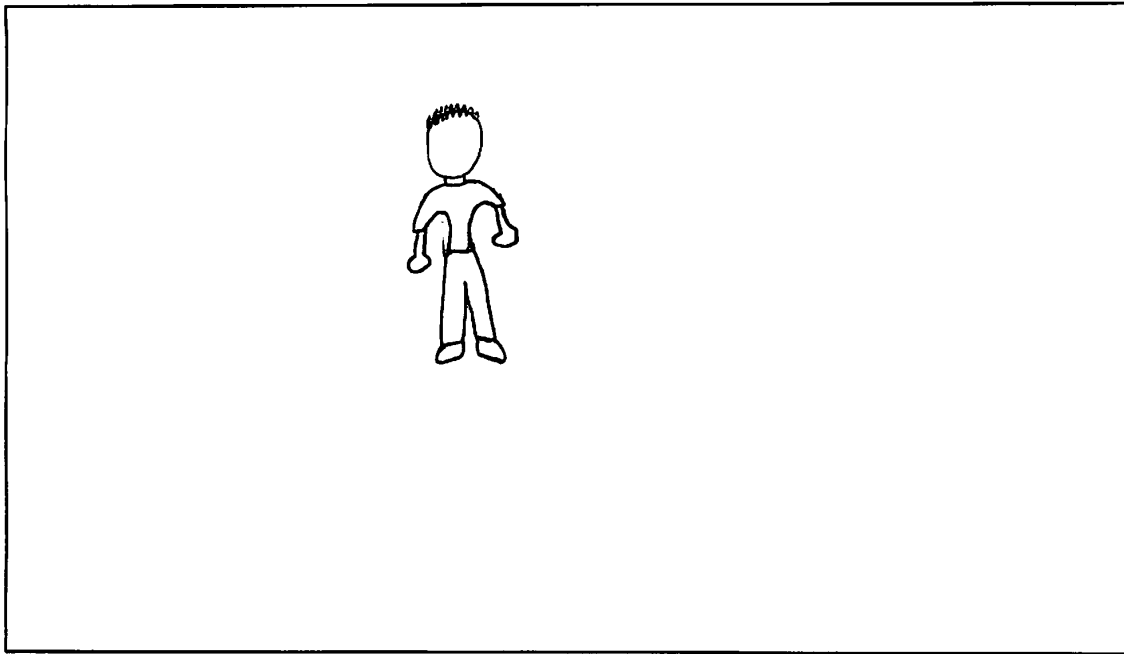


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

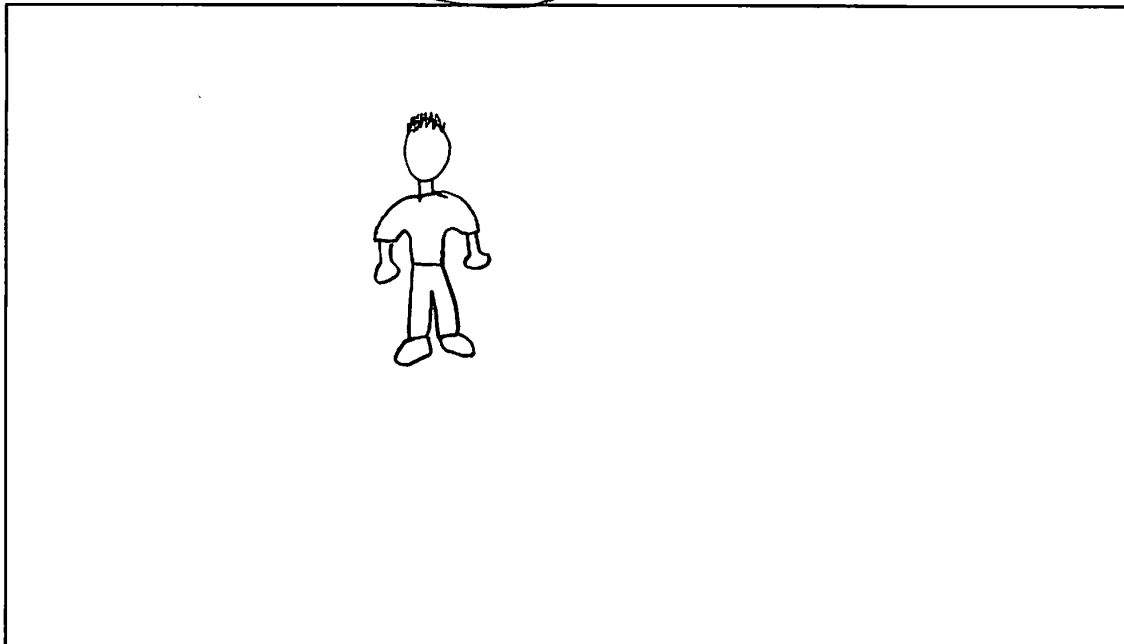


Participant #: 2.2.07

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

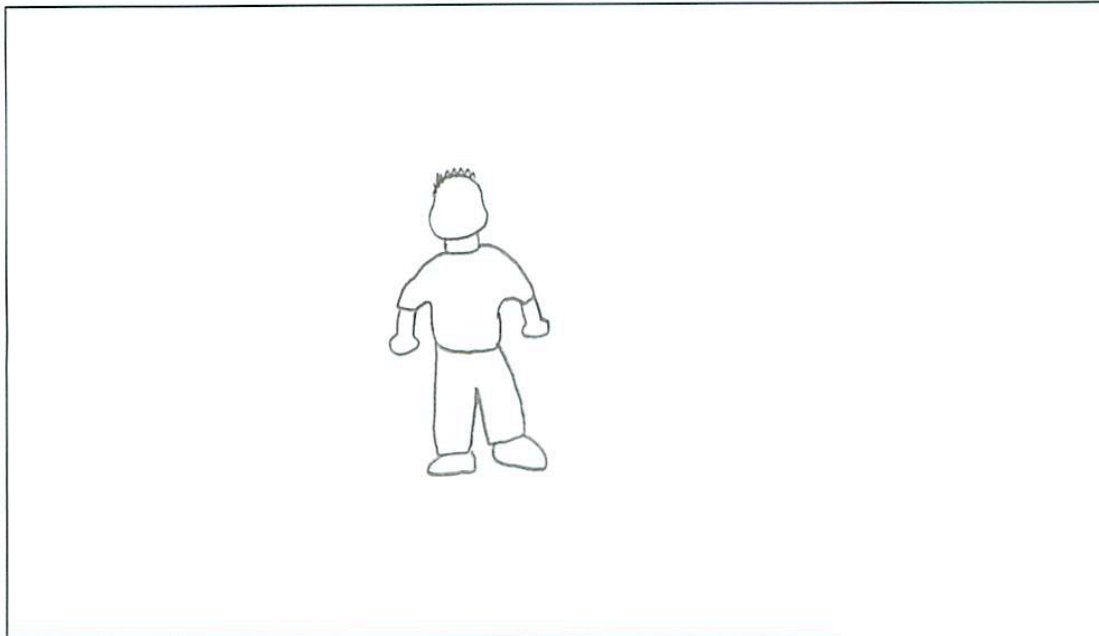


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.

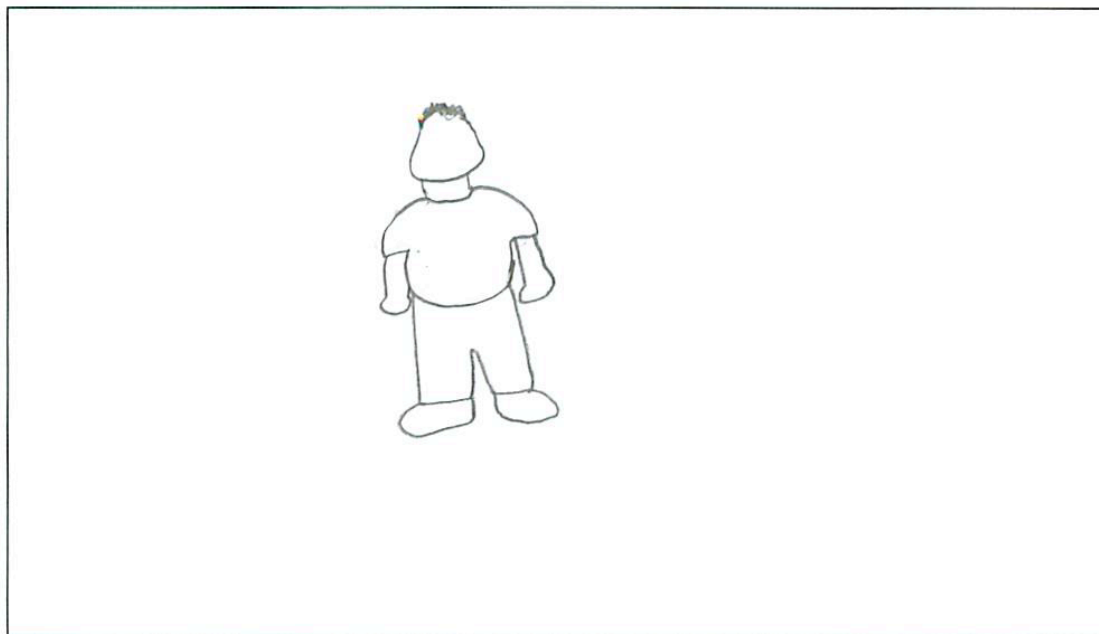


Participant #: 2.2.07

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

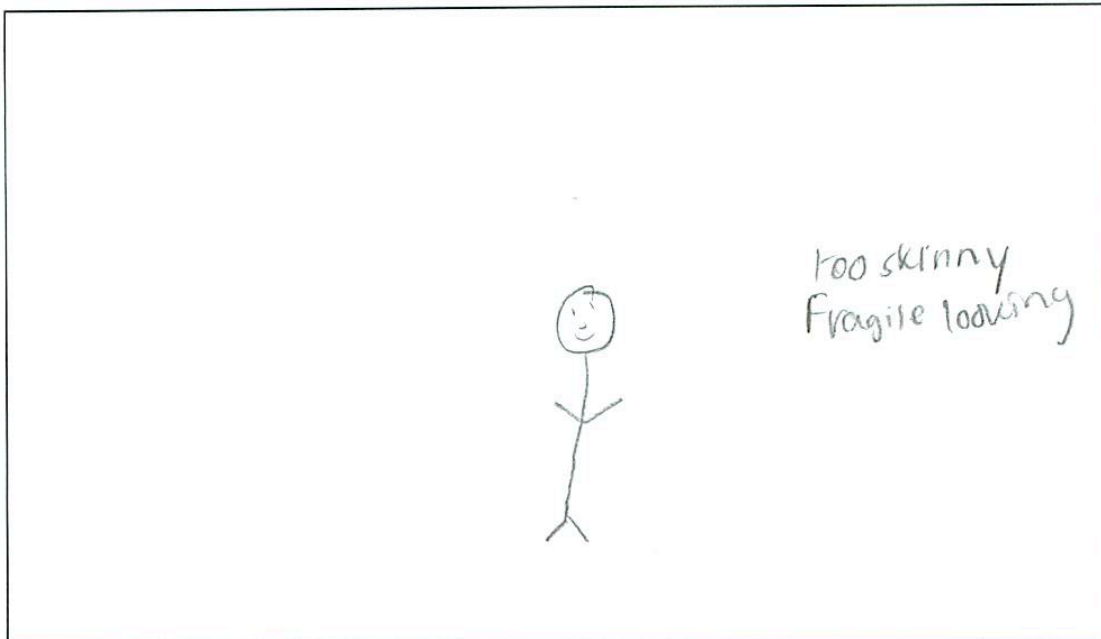


Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

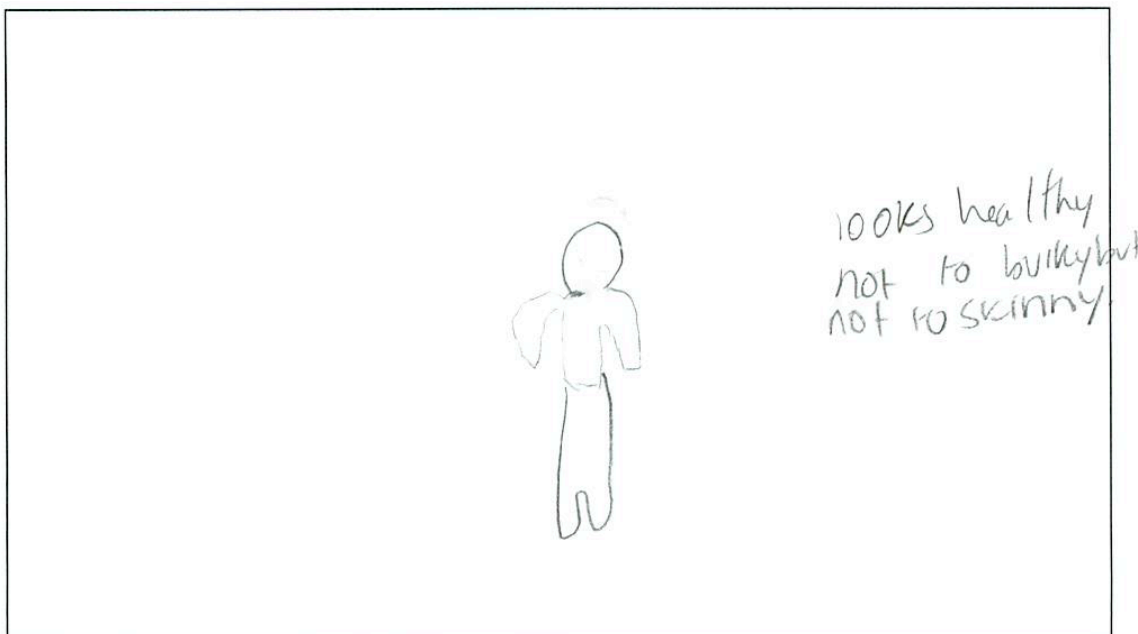


Participant #: 1.2.03

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.2.03

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.

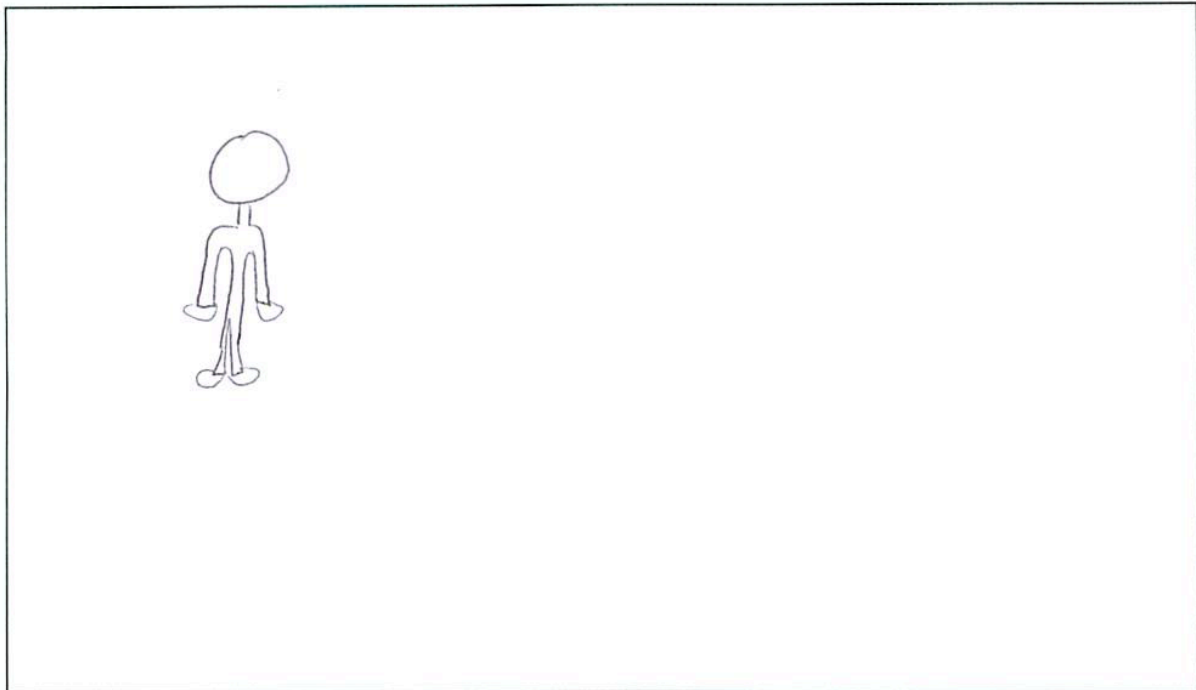
looks somewhat healthy but could  
use improvement.

Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

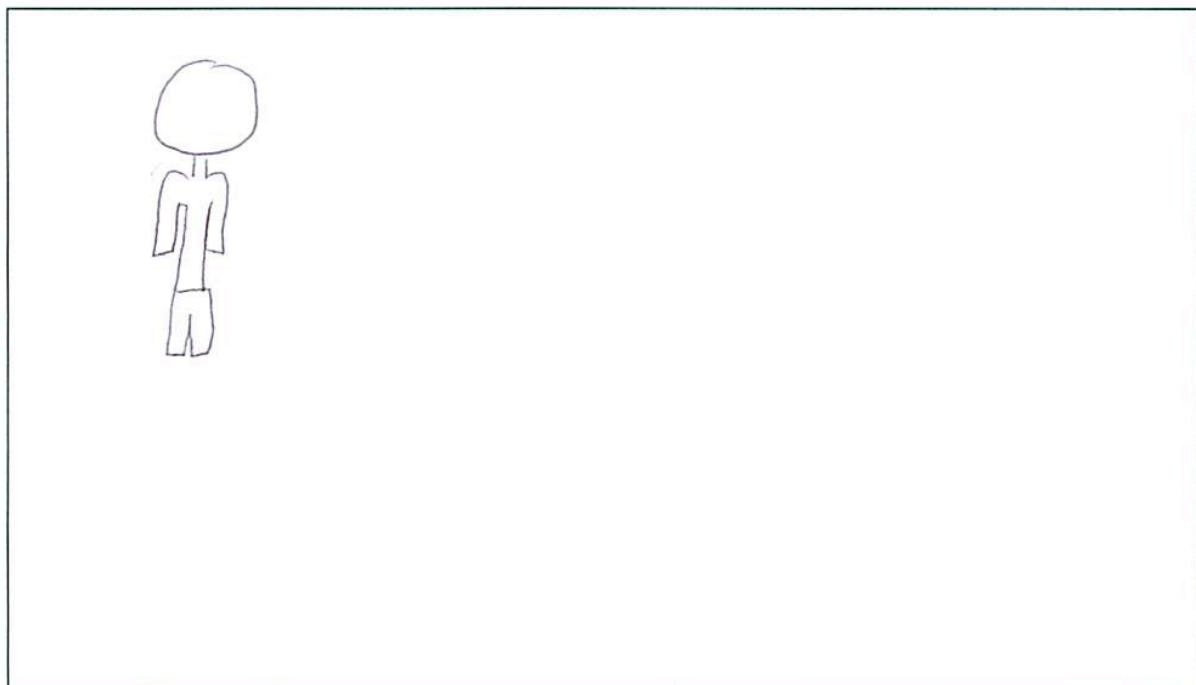
Why to big for any good.

Participant #: 1, 2, 17

Please draw what you believe an underweight person looks like in the box provided.

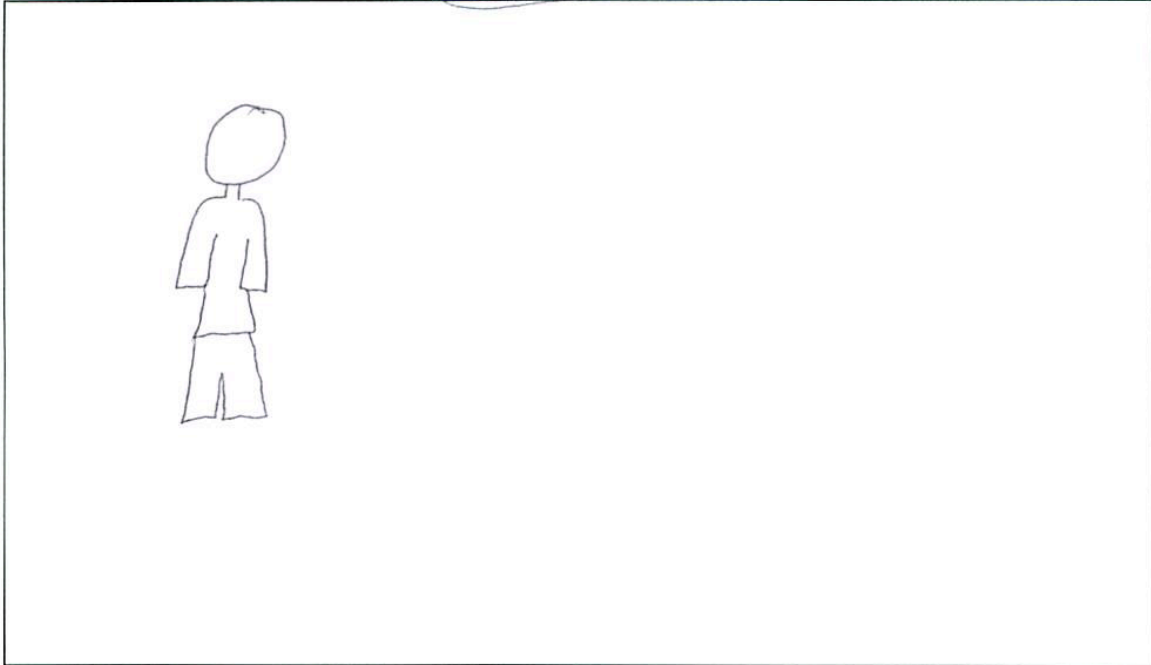


Please draw what you believe a normal weight person looks like in the box provided.



Participant #: 1.2.17

Please draw what you believe an overweight person looks like in the box provided.



Please draw what you believe an obese person looks like in the box provided.

